

TIRUPPAVAI BY ANDAL

C. Sita Ramamurthy



TIRUMALA TIRUPATI DEVASTHANAMS
TIRUPATI

SREE
TIRUPPAVAI

BY
ANDAL

26390

RENDERING INTO ENGLISH

BY

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SRI C. SITARAMAMURTI, M.A.,

[Retd. Lecturer in English (A.P. Edl. Service) and English
Emeritus, Ideal College, Madurai - Srirangam, Tirunelveli, Kanyakumari,

OF

A COMMENTARY IN TELUGU

BY

SRIMAN S. APPALACHARYULU, M.A.

[Retd. Lecturer, in Sanskrit (A.P. Edl. Service)
E-12, B.R.P.V. Township, Visakhapatnam],



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C. Sitaramamurthy, M.A.,

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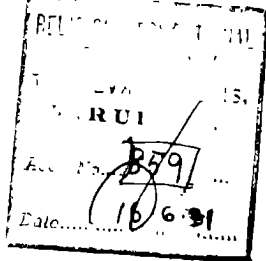
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DEDICATION

*This Translation into English,
like the original Discourses in Telugu,
on TIRUPPĀVAI,
is placed, in all humility,
at the Footstool of*
LORD ŚRĪNIVĀSA of TIRUMALAI
by
C. SITARAMAMURTI
&
S. APPALACHARYULU,
lowly supplicants for His grace.

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FOREWORD

A little girl found by Periyalwar in his Tulasi Garden became one of the most adorable women-saints of our country. Educated in the school of piety and devotion to her God and Guru, she later carved a niche in the mystic poetry with her sublime verses. That is the story of Andal. She lived a life of perfect purity and gave expression to her own spiritual experiences in a style unmatched for its rustic charm.

Andal's THIRUPPAVAI is an unique poetical work which combines ecstatic devotional fervour with mellifluous lyric in a fine blend. She transcreates the anguish and longing of a love lorn Gopika in a dream-like vision and gets enthralled by the music played on the moonblanched banks of the Yamuna.

Sri S. Appalacharyulu's discourses on Tiruppāvai are quite well known among the religious public for their profundity and authoritativeness. The English rendition of these discourses has now, been ably done by Sri C. Sitaramamurthy. We hope that this book will help the spiritual aspirants to give an insight into the great lyrical work.

P. V. R. K. PRASAD.
Executive Officer,
T. T. Devasthanams.

Index to diacritical marks adopted in trans-
literation of Tamil Pāsurams into
English in Tiruppāvai.

அ	a	க	k	இ	i
ஆ	ā	ங	ñ	ஊ	u
இ	i	ச	c	஋	l
ஈ	ī	ஞ	ñ	அ	l
உ	u	ட	ṭ	ஐ	r
ஊ	ū	ன	n	ஊ	n
ஏ	e	த	t	ஐ	j
ஈ	ē	ந	n	ஊ	ś
ஐ	ai	ப	p	ஐ	ś
ஓ	o	ம	m	ஐ	s
ஔ	ō	ய	y	ஐ	h
ஐ	au	ர	r	ஐ	kṣ

FOREWORD

Dhanurmāsa vrata (known also as Mārgaśīrṣa Snāna vrata) is a sacred ritual observed by Śrī Vaiṣṇavites from the hoary past. It is incumbent on the participants to recite the Tiruppāvai, consisting of thirty Pāsurams or hymns, every day and understand and implement in practice the spiritual truths garnered therein. Śrī Āṇḍāl, whose intense devotion found spontaneous expression in this garland of hymns, has enshrined in them a way of spiritual discipline which leads the aspirants to their highest end.

During the course of our observance of the rite in 1968—69, Sri A. Venkateswara Sarma, the owner of our residence, expressed a wish that the significance of each Pāsuram might be explained in the evening to a few friends interested in it. It was thus that the discourses started with a few participants showing keen interest in the contents of this Tamil Divya Prabandha. As larger numbers of citizens evinced interest, the venue had to be shifted to more spacious centres in Kakinada in the succeeding years; and the demand for these discourses went on increasing year after year. Friends who were enthusiastic about dissemination of the spiritual truths expounded in this Divya Prabandha were particular that the discourses should be recorded on tapes and thus preserved for publication at a congenial time.

The Śrī Dēvi Satsaṅgha, a women's organisation formed under the dynamic leadership of Dr. Miss C.V. Ramani, the then Superintendent of the Government Head Quarters Hospital, undertook the task of publication of the lectures. Dr. J. Sitamma got the tapes transcribed in full; and the material covered about 2000 pages. I was asked to review and recast it for the purpose of publication. Applying the shears in a merciless way, I managed to prune it into reasonable shape and size; and held my hand when further elimination would disturb the structure and content thereof. With the blessings of elders and the indefatigable efforts of Śrī Dēvi Satsaṅgha, the Tiruppāvai saw the light of day in 1975 in a sumptuous volume of about 550 pages. By their generous gift of coloured prints, exuding spiritual glow and charm, the T. T. Devasthanam Board contributed to the attractiveness of the publication and laid us under a deep debt of gratitude.

Suggestions were made by the sponsors of the publication and other friends that it would be desirable to get the Discourses translated into English, so that a wider reading public who are not familiar with Telugu but who esteem Tiruppāvai as a sacred Prabandha, like those in the South, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, might be reached. Accordingly, the work of translation was entrusted to a friend, who, after initial hesitation, had undertaken it as a piece of self-discipline and self-edification and as a labour of love. Setting aside for the nonce his incompetence and lack of knowledge of Sanskrit and Indian philosophy, as he had put it, and trusting entirely to the light that the Lord would vouchsafe in His work, he managed to pull through the arduous toil in a space of about six months. He confessed to me that he was often tempted to cut off what appeared to be repetitions, so that the exposition might gain in crispness. But he had overcome such temptation for fear that, by so doing, he might be missing some subtle nuances or shades of meaning or some significant import or emphasis. Again it was not, as he put it, his business as translator to meddle with the original, much less to mangle it. It was for him to keep faithful to it in letter and in spirit as far as the could. And in an extempore discourse, meant to impress thousands of a mixed audience of varying degrees of comprehensives power, repetition, particularly of abstract spiritual truths, becomes an inescapable necessity. It is true that while reading the discourse in cold print, as against hearing it in a living voice, reiteration may become a drag; and an intelligent reader with ready grasp and retentive memory feels irritated with it. But, as is well-known, spiritual truths bear repetition again and again, as with each iteration new meanings flash forth to a meditative mind. Taking all these into account, the translator chose the lesser evil of repetition in the hope that the indulgent reader would not quarrel with him solely on that account. I may state here that, on my side, I am thoroughly satisfied that the English translation has brought out clearly the ideas and their spirit as embodied in the original discourses. So I venture to place it before the reading public whenever it pleases God to vouchsafe its publication.

One last word before I close. Both the translator, Sri C. Sitaramamurti, M.A., and I have no personal interests in this publication. We shall feel happy and well-rewarded if, in God's good time, these discourses reach a wider circle of spiritual aspirants.

S. APPALACHARYULU

INVOCATION

(Prayer)

*Nilā tunga stana giri taṭi suptamudbōdhya kṛṣṇam
Pārārthyam svam śruti śata śirassiddha madhyāpayanti
Svōcchiṣṭāyām sraji nigalitam vā balātkr̥tya bhūṅktē
Gōdā tasyai nama idamidam bhūya ēvāstu bhūyaḥ.*

Thus has Śrī Parāsarabhaṭṭar rendered homage to Śrī Godādevī. "Lord Kṛṣṇa has lain asleep on the elevated hill-sides of Nīlādēvī's bosom. Śrī Gōdādēvī has roused this sleeping lion and taught him the esoteric doctrine of Paratantrata (soul's dependence on the Supreme Self), as enunciated in the Upanishads. She bound him with flower-garlands previously donned by her and forcibly enjoyed him. To that Gōdādēvī, I offer my salutations over and over again."

Nīlādēvī, who is generally known as "Nappinnapiraṭṭi" in Dravidian religious lore, is the daughter of Kumbha (a brother of Yaśōda) and his wife Dharmada. Her brother, Sudāma, is a bosom-friend of Kṛṣṇa. From all aspects of descent, age, beauty and character, Nīla is chosen as a fitting bride to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. But to make her his, Kṛṣṇa is required to show his prowess in yoking together seven refractory bulls, in the same way as Rāma is obliged to do in breaking Śiva's bow to make Sita his. Nīlādēvī is a perfect beauty; all the lineaments of her features exude ravishing loveliness. But it is her stately seductive bosom alone that has cast a spell on Kṛṣṇa (Supreme Self) and charmed him into repose. Should the ever-alert Paramātmā, (Supreme Self) relapse into a state of sound sleep, it is Śrī Gōdādēvī alone that can manage to rouse Him. Here she awakens Kṛṣṇa to a sense of what He is, that Limitless Bliss, which is the real form of the Supreme Self "Kṛṣṇa" means "Infinite Bliss" (aparicchinnā ānanda). It is by her sheer strength that Nīlādēvī has enfolded the Infinite Bliss within her bosom, with the same ease as a casket does a precious stone, and a blooming bud a bee. We sleep under the influence of the Beginningless Māya (Illusion). But the Lord, who ever controls Māya,

never goes to sleep. Nīlādēvi's uniqueness consists in that by her bewitching beauty she has induced sleep into the ever-alert Lord.

It is Gōdādēvi that has roused Him, only to make the submission that she has become aware of her real being. She has reminded Him of the Upanishadic secret that the individual self (Jivātma) is entirely dependent upon the Supreme Self (Paramātma). In other words, her message lies in making known to all that He is the Indweller of the heart of the Universe and that the entire world is His and that He is the Lord Absolute. This great secret of the nature of the self is hidden in the caves of the Upanishads, in the same way as the Supreme Self lies asleep in the valley of the mountains. To grasp this secret and make it known to Him is to give up the freedom (Swātantryam) ascribed to her and to accept her natural position of entire dependence on Him.

The Supreme has made Brahma (the Creator of the Universe) to recite the Vēdas by rote. Gōdādēvi dares to instruct that Supreme Lord about the nature of the phenomenon of self which forms the crest-jewel in the crown of the Vedās. The Supreme binds the world with chains of its own actions and makes it to experience the fruits thereof. Gōdādēvi, on the other hand, has bound Him with the flower-garlands previously donned by her, and in return for her daring action enjoyed the Supreme Himself. In this lies her uniqueness.

When human beings acquire knowledge of their own selves (*i.e.*, realise who they really are), they understand how entirely dependent they are on the Supreme Self; and then begin to love Him. Thereafter, the Independent Lord becomes a dependant on His supplicant-devotees. It is given to Gōdādēvi alone to instruct the All-knowing Supreme, as though He is an ignoramus needing instruction, and to render the entirely Independent Being into one helplessly dependent. As the Supreme has accepted the flower-garland doffed by her, she has acquired the names of "Āmukta Mālyada" and "Śūḍikkoḍutta Nācciyar." Her father, Viṣṇu-chitta, known also as "Bhaṭṭanātha" and "Peri-āḷwar," was a garland-maker; and the garlands made by him gave the Lord immense joy. As she is the child of the garland-maker, she has come to be known as "Kōdai" or "Gōdā" (which means "Māla" or garland of flowers). "I render my repeated salutations to

this daughter of Bhaṭṭanātha, to this beloved of Śrī Ranganātha, to this Āṇḍāl, the admired sister of BhagavadRāmānuja. In this life and in the future lives, in the present times and in eternity, in this world and in the other world, may my salutations go forth to Āṇḍāl for ever and ever!" In conclusion, Parāśarabhaṭṭa seeks the gracious favour that devotees like him be granted the same humble service at her feet as she has sought at God's.

*Annavayal puduvai yāṇḍālaraṅgarṅku
ppannu tiruppāvai ppaḷ padiyam inniṣaiyāl
pāḍi koḍuttāl narpāmālai, pūmālai
śūḍikkoḍuttālaiccol.*

"O mind! Meditate on that Āṇḍāl, who has manifested herself in Śrīvilliputtūr, which abounds in fertile lands, filled with waters on which swans move about. With her mind absorbed in contemplation of Śrī Ranganātha, she has composed these hymns (Pāsurams), rendered them in her melodious voice and offered them to Him. This garland of words (Vāṅgmālika) is called Tiruppāvai. In the same way, she has offered him flower-garlands after first decking herself with them. O mind! Concentrate your attention on her!"

Both Āṇḍāl and her father Periyālwār are referred to as "Villiputtūr Āṇḍāl" and "Villiputtūr Ālwār" respectively. Thus 'Villiputtūr' has become a significant appellation and mark of distinction for them. It is noteworthy that the place abounds in swans and fertile lands yielding rich harvests. Swans are famous for their lovely gait. Gōḍādēvi possesses a similar grace in her conduct. Gōḍādēvi is herself a kṣhētra (hallowed piece of earth) yielding a rich harvest of devotion (Bhakti). It is appropriate that a place that abounds in swans and harvests has become the place of manifestation of Āṇḍāl, who is an exemplar of righteous conduct (sadācharaṇaśīla) and an embodiment of intense devotion (Bhaktipravaṇa). Out of the depths of her contemplation have emerged flower-like words; and holding them by the thread of her melodious voice, she has made a garland of hymns called Tiruppāvai and offered it to Śrī Ranganātha. In as much as it is her inner experience that has rushed out in a torrent of melodious words, this offering of a garland of hymns (pāmāla or padyamāla) must itself be considered as a previously enjoyed

one (ucchiṣṭam). She is called "Pāḍi kkoḍuttāḷ," as she is the lady who offered to God the songs she has already enjoyed in her heart. She is known as "Śūḍikkoḍuttāḷ" because she has offered God the flower-garlands she has previously decked herself with.

If we contemplate her, we too shall be blessed with the fortune of rendering devoted service to God with our thought, word and deed. To have experienced God is to render service with the mind. When that experience flows out in expression, it becomes a votive wreath of words—spontaneous, sweet and sublime. Offering flower-garlands is the consecrated service rendered by hands. Offering garlands, whether of flowers or of hymns, is an act of love. Only those offerings, which the beloved enjoys before she makes them, taste most delicious to the lover. When love gets intense, whatever offerings are made by the beloved without previously tasting them become insipid, and fail to give pleasure to the lover. Not only that: it is said that they burn like sparks of fire when they are sprinkled on him and cause him agony. Let us therefore meditate on Āṇḍāḷ so that we too may acquire the fortune of rendering similar devoted, loving, service to God.

*Śūḍikkoḍutta śuḍarkkoḍiyē ! tol pāvai
pāḍi yaruḷaval-ḥpal vaḷaiyāy!—"nāḍini
vēṅgaḍavaṛkennai vidi" yenṛa vimṁārttam
nāṅgaḍavā vāṇṇamē nalgū.*

"O slender Creeper of gold! You have offered the flower-garland worn by you to Śrī Ranganātha. O wearer of divine bracelets! You have elevated us by rendering into song the divine rite (Vrata) observed by the gōpis in the past. You have prayed to Cupid, the Lord of love (Manmatha), seeking his favour to secure for you the place of the beloved of Venkatāchalapati. Pray, grant us, your servants, the strength not to violate that prayer."

Āṇḍāḷ is a resplendent creeper of gold. A creeper puts on flowers and then offers them for the worship of God. In a similar way, this slender creeper of gold has offered to Ranganātha the flower-garland of love which she has previously worn. To know her is to appreciate this main characteristic of her nature.

In winter, during the month of Mārgaśīrṣa, gōpikas perform this ritual of daily bath, with the object of gaining union with

Kṛṣṇa. Āṇḍāl has done a great favour to succeeding generations by making it known to them through rendering into song the hidden secret of attaining the Lord. She has worn several kinds of bracelets: bracelets signifying possession of the Lord's affection; bracelets indicating aiswarya, affluence; bracelets proving kainkarya, devoted service to the most Beloved; bracelets refusing to slide down on account of the eternal union with the Lover; bracelets adorning the Lover's neck as He clasps her in embrace; bracelets suggesting her identity by their sound, even when she remains unseen; bracelets clinking when, fancying herself a gōpika, she sways to and fro churning curds; these and other bracelets signifying many other types of devotion are worn by her. Hungering for Venkaṭāchalapati's love, she performed a rite to please the lord of love (Kāmadēva) and prayed to him to secure for her union with Venkaṭāchalapati. To utter the same prayer and to entertain the same desire for God alone and always, we have to seek the gracious favour of Āṇḍāl.

In Tiruppāvai, Āṇḍāl transforms herself into a gōpika and with Kṛṣṇa in her mind performs the Kātyāyini Vrata in Śrī Villiputtūr. The presiding deity of the place is "Vaḍa-pērumgōyi luḍayān" (Vaṭapatraśāyi). To him did she offer the flower-garlands worn by her. And she secured union with Śrī Raṅganātha. She worshipped the god of love desiring to become the beloved of Śrī Venkaṭāchalapati. Though she utters different names in her yearning, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Śrī Vaṭapatraśāyi, Śrī Venkaṭāchalapati and Śrī Raṅganātha, it is to be understood that she is having in her mind only one God-phenomenon, the Nameless One of a thousand names.

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We express our gratitude to the Chairman and Members of the Board of Trustees of Tirumalai-Tirupati Devasthanams for accepting for publication Sri C. Sitaramamurti's English version of Sri S. Appalacharyulu's Discourses on Tiruppavai in Telugu.

We are deeply grateful to Sri P.V.R.K. Prasad, I.A.S., Executive Officer of T. T. Devasthanams, for initiating measures to publish the book without further loss of time. We render our thanks to Sri R. Suryanarayana Murthi, Public Relations Officer and Sri M. Vijayakumara Reddy, Manager, T. T. D. Press, and his staff for their cooperation in the neat execution of printing the book.

We are beholden to Dr. G. Damodaran, M.A., Ph.D., Professor of Tamil, S. V. University, Tirupati, for his kind review and valued suggestions.

We express our thanks to the numerous friends and devotees who have encouraged us to launch upon this work.

Kakinada, }
Feb. 1980. }

C. Sitaramamurti
S. Appalacharyulu

INTRODUCTION

Sri Godādēvi was not born of human parents. She was found in the Tulasi garden by Viṣṇuchitta, also known as Bhaṭṭanātha and Peri-ālwār. “Vaḍa pērum Kōyiluḍayān” or Vaṭapatraśāyi presides in the northern mansion of Śrī Villiputtūr. Though a Brahmin, Viṣṇuchitta was not trained in the disciplines of Vēdic lore; yet he was engrossed fully in consecrated services to the Deity, such as offering flower-garlands at the time of worship. While he was engaged in loosening the earth in the Tulasi garden, he found a female child among the plants, in the same way as Janaka found Sīta while ploughing the earth for his sacrificial rite (yajña). As he had no children, he brought up this little child with great fondness and love, naming her “Kōdai” (flower-garland). In the same way as Tulasi has its natural fragrance, Kōdai has spread from her very birth the sweet scent of knowledge, devotion and renunciation, and displayed enthusiastic interest in things divine. As she grew up into adolescence, she fervently aspired for the hand of Kṛṣṇa in marriage. Having heard from elders that, in the past, gōpikas performed Kātyāyanī Vrata to realise a similar ambition, she undertook to go through the same discipline, which consisted in the daily ritual of taking an early morning bath throughout the month of Mārgaśīrṣa. She transmitted this spiritual discipline to succeeding generations in the form of a sacred book of songs called Tiruppāvai.

Between the worldlings who identify the body with the true self and the seers (Ṛṣis) who attain to self-realisation by the practice of a course of spiritual discipline (yōga), there is as much difference as there is between an atom and a mountain. The same difference separates the seers from the great saints (mahā bhaktās) who, without any effort on their part and by the sheer grace of God, get completely engrossed in God-consciousness. Among the great devotees, Viṣṇuchitta or Peri-ālwār occupies the pre-eminent place. The Supreme Being showered His grace on this uneducated devotee and made him establish in the Court of Vallabhadēva, the Paṇḍyan King, that Śrīmannārāyaṇa was Himself the Supreme and the Absolute. Then the treasure, damarcated as prize and intended for the establisher of truth in this religious controversy, fell, of its own accord, at his feet. The King and the assembly felt

delighted and honoured the victor by taking him on an elephant-ride in a procession. Śrīmannārāyaṇa Himself, accompanied by His consorts, Lakṣmi and Bhūdēvi, came down to the earth, riding on Garuḍa, to witness this grand reception. When Perī-ālwār saw this vision, he was overpowered by his love for the Lord; and apprehending evil-eye (dṛṣṭi dōṣa) and to avert it, he recited the Pallāṇḍu-maṅgaḷam, a hymn invoking 'safety' for the Lord, Pallāṇḍu maṅgaḷam precedes the recitation of any of the scriptures in Tamil as invariably as Praṇava (OM) precedes the recitation of Vēdas. Hence it is that Viṣṇuchitta is deemed to be the Perī-ālwār, the foremost among all the great saints (Bhaktas or ālwārs).

Āṇḍāl is even superior to Perī-ālwār. The ālwārs were those who were immersed in sleep (anādi māyayā suptaḥ) and were bereft of all knowledge of self under the influence of Beginningless Illusion (Māya), until the Lord Himself, of His own accord, condescended to rouse them from their torpor and to reveal Himself to them. Then only could they see God. The greatness of Āṇḍāl, on the other hand, lies in that she has herself approached the Supreme Lord, and rousing Him, announced herself to Him. Hence it is that she is given the pride of place among the ālwārs as an exemplar, after whom people may mould their lives. In the same way as Lakṣmaṇa loved Śrī Rāma from his childhood, Āṇḍāl loved Bhagavān from her childhood and immersed herself in contemplating His qualities.

The other Ālwārs were *men* in physical form; they acquired femininity in their minds by intense imagination; then they took the Supreme Being (Parama Puruṣha) to be their Lord and fell deeply in love with Him. Āṇḍāl who was by inherent nature feminine, both in outward form and inward mould, and who had been absorbed from her childhood in Him and His attributes, could easily reach the climax (Parākāṣṭha) in her love for Him. Under the guise of a ritual of daily-bath in the month of Mārga-śīrṣa, she reached Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa and prayed to him thus: "This self of mine belongs in every way to you; it is yours. Let it not come to grief by losing sight of its meaning and purpose. Grant it the privilege of rendering such services to you as are consistent with its nature. Pray, vouchsafe that this soul devotes itself to your service as long as it exists". This is the essence of this rite.

Instilled with love of God from childhood, she has chosen Him for her lover and wished to marry Him. With this intense desire she elected Vāṭapatraśāyī, the presiding deity of Śrīvilliputtūr, for her lord. Failing to secure this consummation, she became dejected and began making enquiries whether there were people who aspired for and obtained the Lord and enjoyed Him as their Lover. She learnt that the milk-maids of Nandavraja had entertained such a wish, and in fulfilment of it enjoyed Him as their Lover. But this was in a different epoch altogether. The thought that in the present time it was not possible to attain Śrī Kṛṣṇa made her disconsolate. Let this thought alone! Were it possible even to see the region of Yamuna or Brindāvan where Lord Kṛṣṇa roamed about, or the Gōvardhanagiri which he raised aloft on his little finger, she would touch them and try to keep alive! She wept that she had no strength even for this modest achievement. She lacked the strength of Sīta who could realise her wish by having a bow for a wager. Nor could she, like Nīlādēvi, prescribe that only he who could control and yoke the seven refractory bulls could lay claim to her. Her only absorbing thought was how to get Him: in case of failing to do so, how to keep alive. An anecdote of the gōpīs' experience came to her mind in a flash. She heard from the elders that, on one occasion, while the gōpīs were led into ecstatic trance in their dalliance with the Divine (Rāsa-Kṛīḍa), Kṛṣṇa desired to bring down the happiness to the range of their experience by eliminating the excess-emotion. So he disappeared from the scene. Not finding Kṛṣṇa in their midst, the gōpīs wept with agony and tried to keep alive by imitating the sporting pranks (leelas) of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. On recalling this to mind, Āṇḍāl felt that she too could do likewise. So she decided that by adopting the rite performed by the gōpikas to secure Kṛṣṇa's union, she could in the intensity of her imagination realise the same happiness! She has imagined Śrīvilliputtūr to be Nandavraja (Nanda's village); and her companions to be gōpikas; and the temple of Vāṭapatraśāyī to be Nanda's mansion; and Vāṭapatraśāyī to be Lord Kṛṣṇa. She is now in Nanda's village; and she is no longer Āṇḍāl but a gōpika. In the intensity of her imagination, she became identified with a gōpika, acquiring in the process the gait, the mode of dress, the hair-style, the accent and even the peculiar smell associated with the milkmaids. She could secure Lord Kṛṣṇa as her Spouse by performing this rite in the manner indicated above. Lord Śrī

Ranganātha is no other than Lord Kṛṣṇa, manifesting Himself in Śrīrangam; and Āṇḍāl reached fulfilment in eternal union with Him.

Let us now proceed to Nandavraja, Nanda's village. Desiring to do favour to jīvas (individual selves), the Supreme Lord has endowed them with bodies enriched with all the sense-faculties; created this universe for their delight; given them Vēdas and Śāstrās which show them the way to salvation; in fact, kept ready for their use all the instruments that enable them to reach Him. In spite of all these favours, the jīvas decline to tread the straight path and straying into devious ways get immersed in the stream of sense-pleasures and come to grief. Unable to endure their sad plight and wishing to elevate them, the Lord has assumed their own human form and manifested Himself amidst them. Wishing to bring them under His spell by His beauty and character and miraculous acts and carry them with Him, the Lord has made His descent into Nandavraja as Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Nandavraja is rural complex with five lakh families. The gōpikas of the place have developed an inescapable and lasting attachment to Kṛṣṇa from their childhood. They have even felt that without him they have no existence at all. At all times and in all states, they have found life worth living, only if they have the company of Kṛṣṇa. As time moved along thus, they grew into adolescence; and with them, Kṛṣṇa too! The elders decided that as Kṛṣṇa was a mischief-monger (dhūrta) the young girls should not be allowed to come within his sight. So they confined them in the interior parts of the houses. But in a few days, to the good fortune alike of Kṛṣṇa and the gōpikas, the village was caught up in drought; and both the villagers and the cattle famished for food. Cattle were the wealth of the villagers; rains were essential for their fodder. The elders thought how best they could remedy the situation. Some of them, who were conversant with tradition, suggested that a particular rite, to be performed only by gōpikas, could bring them relief. But the only one skilled in conducting this rite to fruition was Kṛṣṇa, the son of Nandagōpa. It became inevitable for those very elders, who decided to keep the young girls out of Kṛṣṇa's sight, to fetch them and entrust them to his care and request him to see that they perform the prescribed rite properly and bring about rain. But Kṛṣṇa stiffened with his innate mischievousness and declined the task as beyond his capacity. As they pressed him on with entreaties, he gradually

yielded and finally undertook it as an inescapable necessity. The elders departed, leaving the girls to Kṛṣṇa's care. That night Kṛṣṇa sojourned with all the gōpikas to the banks of the Yamuna and enjoyed, as on the night of Rāsakrīḍa, complete at-one-ment with them in transcendental consciousness (mahābhāva samādhi). Bringing them out of this exalted experience, Kṛṣṇa sent them to their respective homes after exhorting them to assemble for the rite before dawn. He himself left to rest at Nīlādēvi's mansion. Some of the gōpikas could not sleep at all that night. Some others went on meditating upon their experience with Kṛṣṇa and could not regain consciousness of their surroundings. While things stood thus, Āṇḍāl who got up first gathered some gōpikas and, rousing others who were still asleep, proceeded to the mansion of Nandagōpa where Kṛṣṇa was resting. This rite extended over a month. And with a hymn for every day, Tiruppāvai contains thirty songs. Rousing ten gōpikas and reaching Nandgōpa's mansion, they managed to awaken Nandagōpa, Yaśōda, Bala Rāma, Nīlādēvi and finally Śrī Kṛṣṇa. They then made their hearts' wish known to Him and secured the privilege of companionship with Him, if only to render service to Him as long as their souls would last.

Let us examine the secret of Nandavraja. All the villagers are simple, unsophisticated herdsmen. Kṛṣṇa, who was born as a child of Dēvaki and Vasudēva in Mathura, himself came to the village to become the child of Nanda and Yaśōda. Having become a cowherd, he acquired similarity with the others in the village, without affecting difference in name or form or deeds. God Himself reached the village assuming a different and easily-accessible form as Kṛṣṇa. This village is the world of saṁsāra, the world of non-self bound by birth and death. There are three different types of people in it; some are ill-disposed to Kṛṣṇa; some others are well-disposed towards him; and the rest are indifferent. These attitudes are due to the influence of the three guṇas: Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. Sattvagūṇa (purity) inclines them towards him; Rajas (pride) sets them against him. The village elders are proud and believe that they are independent; and hence their tendency to oppose Kṛṣṇa. The damsels, on the other hand, are pure by nature; and they believe that they belong to Kṛṣṇa and to none else. This sense of belonging, not only tends them towards Kṛṣṇa but also makes them fully engrossed in him.

Though God-consciousness is inlaid in every soul, Primal Nature (Prakṛti) throws it into oblivion and prevents Sattvaguṇa from turning to God. This is why the gōpa elders obstruct gōpikas meeting Kṛṣṇa. But when faced with a crisis, which is beyond their power to solve with their own effort, even the proud have no alternative but to turn to God, if only to gain their worldly ends. When drought threatens the destruction of their cattle-wealth, the elders, who have been, till then, opposed to free movement of the young girls, gladly surrender them to Kṛṣṇa's care. While the external objective is being gained and inward experience grows, the obstruction of pride gradually subsides. The tendency to purity mingles with the Divine and, in course of time, forgets itself in God-consciousness to the delight even of the proud and settles down to a state of eternal surrender.

The elders thought of this particular rite to obtain rain. The gōpikas to whom it was entrusted agreed to perform it; Kṛṣṇa directed and completed it; the god of rain was pleased and fulfilled their prayer. The gōpa elders, who were averse to their daughters ever coming within Kṛṣṇa's sight, were now beside themselves with joy. They got what they wanted—rain. The gōpikas got what they wanted—the refreshing showers of intimate contact with God. With this, all the obstacles were removed to their everlasting union with Lord Kṛṣṇa. How exceptionally fortunate were they! How inexhaustibly merciful is the Supreme Self! In this mundane world which appears so detestable even to us, in this physical body which we ourselves consider so repugnant, without any distinguishing form or name to signify His real nature, He has chosen to identify Himself with us, and live in our midst as one of us. Enduring all impediments with patience, He gradually brings under control all those who are either opposed or indifferent to Him by developing their sāttvic character, and goes to their aid and enables them to attain Him. This is the Mārگاśiṛṣa Vrata, the Ritual of Bath in Mārگاśiṛṣa month. By performing it, people can gain external ends, such as material prosperity; and inward benefits such as experience of the Divine. Āṇḍāl is the gōpika who, by performing this rite, has gained union with God. Wishing that we too should attain that bliss, she has given us this scripture of Tiruppāvai as a means for our salvation. Tiruppāvai means 'Śrī Vratam', a rite that bestows (aiśwarya) affluence—material and worldly happiness (priyam) as well as spiritual and other-worldly bliss (Śrēyam)—in consecrated service to, and eternal union with, God.

TIRUPPĀVAI

PĀŚURAM I

PREFACE

Finding that a suitable time has arrived for the performance of the solemn rite, Āndāl and her companions (imitating the gōpikas) sing the praises of the season at the outset. Then they decide as to who are worthily qualified to perform the rite. They muse over what they should obtain as the fruit of this ritual and of the instrument that can bring about the desired end.

*Mārgaḷittiṅgaḷ madinirainda nannāḷ;
nīrāḍappōduvīr! pōduminō, nēṟilaiyīr!
Sirmalgumāyppāḍi ccelva cciṟumīrgāḷ!
kūrvēl-koḍundolilan nandagopan kumaran,
Erārnda kaṇṇi yaśodai yīḷaṅciṅgam,
kārmēni cceṅgaṇ kadirmadiyampōḷ mugattān,
Nārāyaṇan^a namakkē paṟaitaruvān,
pārōr puḷalappaḍindēḷo rempāvāy.*

Summary.

Now has arrived the month of Mārgaśīrṣa. The days are auspicious and the nights are filled with moonlight. You, the beautiful young women, enjoying all the comforts of the prosperous village Vrepalle and wearing strange and attractive ornaments! Listen, all those who wish to participate in the morning bath, join us and move ahead. Kṛṣṇa is the son of Nandagopa, who in his solicitude for his son, ever keeps alert, with his sharp Velāyudha always poised, to punish severely those who intend harm to him. Kṛṣṇa is the beloved lion-cub of Yasoda who contemplates him

with her large beaming eyes; Kṛṣṇa with his body shining with the colour of a dark cloud, with his eyes bright as red lotus-petals, with his divine face radiating the mingled beams of the bright sun and the mellow moon,—this Kṛṣṇa is no other than Nārāyaṇa Himself. He is ready to give, only to us (people who never seek anything from any but him) what we badly need, namely, the instrument “*parai*” which is required for the fulfilment of this ritual. Therefore, join us in all your numbers in this ceremonial rite and make the world of onlookers happy.

Commentary.

1 *Mārgaḷi ttiṅgaḷ madi niṛainda nannālāl:*

After enjoying the night with Kṛṣṇa, the gōpikās leave promising to meet again. Some of them fall into sound sleep. Some others are so absorbed in their late experience that it is difficult to determine whether they are awake or asleep. A few could not sleep at all; and they set out to awaken others. The leader of this band, Āṇḍāl feels happy that at last the time has come to attain Kṛṣṇa.

So she begins to sing, first of all, the praise of time (Kāla) which is beginningless and all-powerful. Under its influence they have so long suffered the pangs of separation from God (Bhagavān). With the advent of Mārgaśīrṣa, a change has come over the attitude of their elders; they have allowed their daughters to meet Kṛṣṇa freely and perform the ritual.

The month is Mārgaśīrṣa; that half of the month is the bright fortnight with the moon waxing in brightness; and the day the ritual begins is the most auspicious one. The girls therefore rejoice in their good fortune.

The month of Mārgaśīrṣa is specially dear to Viṣṇu. In the Gīta, Śrī Kṛṣṇa declares that among the months he is himself Mārgaśīrṣa. (*Māsānām Mārgaśīrṣoḥam*). Lord Kṛṣṇa is like the shade of a vast tree that cools those who are heated by the mid-summer sun and warms those who are frozen by the severe cold of winter. (*Vāsudeva tarucchāyā nāti śīta na gharmadā*) Mārgaśīrṣa, identified among months as a form of Viṣṇu, is temperate in climate, neither torrid nor frozen. Mārgaśīrṣā thus is a

month congenial to the practice of God-consciousness. According to some astrologers, the starry sphere is in the form of a deer with the star Mṛgaśīra at its head; and when the sun enters the star, a new year begins. So this is the beginning of a new year. If we reckon a year as a day, the month of Mārgaśīrṣa becomes the dawn, the Brahma Muhūrta. Dawn is the time for the upsurge of the primary tendency of sattva or purity; and that is the time fit for enjoying God-consciousness.

Night is the time of separation from God. Dawn heralds the sun-rise and the radiating rays slowly spread over the horizon. When the night of separation passes and when hope arises that the time suited to God-consciousness is approaching, we experience the Brahma-muhūrta of our lives. The living creatures have only one night and one day. All the time that is spent without a thought of God is night. The moment the hope of knowing God strikes the mind and grows into God-union, the dawn has come into our lives; and night returns not thereafter. As Mārgaśīrṣa represents this dawn for them, they sing glorifying it in glowing terms. The gopa elders cannot venture out so early for fear of cold. So the gōpikas are happy that they can freely meet Śrī Kṛṣṇa. It is the time that has oriented them towards Kṛṣṇa; and so they glorify it.

It is not the unlettered gōpikas alone that have sung the praises of Kāla (time). The seer Vālmīki praises the month "Chaitra" that it has arrived at the very moment that Daśaratha thought of the coronation of Śrīrāma. He begins his verse with the praise of the month ("Chaitra Śrīmān ayaṁ Māsaḥ Puṇyaḥ Puṣpita Kānanah.") Months take their names after the stars that mark the Full Moon day; if Chitra is the star, the month is called Chaitra; if it is Mṛgaśīra it is called Mārgaśīrṣa. Possibly, in those days, months are reckoned from Full moon day to the next Full moon day! The greatness of time depends on the plenty that it gives. Chaitra is the month when the dry trees shoot forth fresh buds. And Mārgaśīrṣa is the time when the land smiles in plenty! Chaitra was marked out for the coronation of Śrī Rāma as King; and Mārgaśīrṣa for the coronation of the gōpikas as Kṛṣṇa's devotees and servants.

According to the lunar calendar, Chaitra is the month to be mentioned first; similarly Rāma is worthy to be uttered foremost

by any one. Like Rāma, Chaitra is attended by Śrī or prosperity. Rāma is bewitchingly beautiful and exaltingly pure. So is Chaitra, pure with its fresh buds and exceedingly fascinating. While people had to beautify the capital for Rāma's coronation, the forests bedecked themselves to celebrate the occasion. If Rāma puts on a crown of diamonds, the forests put on crowns of flowers. So it is that Chaitra has come to be described as 'Śrīmān.'

In the same way, the month of Mārgaśīrṣa has become worthy of gōpikas' praise—with this difference. Trees put forth new buds in Chaitra but do not yield fruits. So also the desire to coronate Śrī Rāma has sprung forth from Daśaratha's mind; but it has not reached fruition. Not so in the case of gōpikas. In Mārgaśīrṣa the fields present the pleasing picture of ripe crops, bending heavily to earth. The gōpikas in whose minds the seed of desire of union with Kṛṣṇa had sprung forth and grown for some time, reached fruition without any hitch and inclined on Kṛṣṇa's feet, there to enjoy eternal union with them. Ordinary people begin their worldly pursuits choosing auspicious times. But in the case of those who become worthy of God's love by their tendency to pursue godliness, time purifies itself and follows them. The gōpikas did not start their rite (Vrata) after ascertaining the auspicious moment. The moment they got the permission of the elders and the consent of Kṛṣṇa, they began their Vrata. It so happened that the beginning of their Vrata was marked by an auspicious month, fortnight and day. This was the first occasion when they met Kṛṣṇa face to face, to see and be seen, in bright moonlight without fear of being taken to task. Prior to this, their meetings were clandestine; and they took place in darkness. How fortunate are the gōpikas in that the very elders who previously resented and obstructed their meetings with Kṛṣṇa gladly left them now to his care! Again, how lucky that this day which is the most auspicious of all days in the fortnight, nay in the whole month, has arrived! The very God who threatened to fling them into demon-wombs (Kṣipāmi) has relented this day and agreed to give them (dadāmi) the instrument or means to reach Him. Moreover, this is the day on which people (here the gopa-elders) who stood up against God, saying that they could save themselves, bend with faith that He alone is the saviour! Such a day must be considered very auspicious. Akrūra makes a similar declaration when he sees Kṛṣṇa simultaneously on the chariot and in the waters

of the Yamuna, while making oblations to the sun: “*Adya mē saphalam janma suprabhātā cha mē niṣā.*” “This day my life has become meaningful and reached fulfilment. My night is gone and the day has broken.” Herein is stressed the importance of the day when the tendency to approach God declares itself. To the gōpikas the advent of the day, after which they have long been hankering, gave them greater happiness than actual union with the Supreme Self could have given

This is called Mārgaśīrṣa Vratam, Snāna Vratam and Dhanurmāsavratam. Mārgaśīrṣa of the Lunar Calendar is the same as the Dhanurmāsa of the Solar Calendar. What is required to be done in this period is the bath at dawn. It is already explained that Mārgaśīrṣa represents the Brahmamuhūrta (the dawn) when the tendency to purity (sattvaguṇa) is predominant. Dusk is the period when the tendency to action (rajas) is uppermost; and under its influence, doubts arise as to the nature of things seen in twilight with a shade more of darkness. We know that there is a thing there, but the doubt arises as to its nature and form; for instance, whether it is a thief or a tree-stump. This is known as (*Anyathājñāna*) misapprehension; and this is the effect of rajo-guṇa. We know that there is such a thing as God-phenomenon. But doubts assail us; and that stage represents dusk in spiritual life. Night is the time when the tendency to inaction (*tamōguṇa*) dominates; and under its influence mōha (delusion) creates viparīta-jñāna (perverse understanding). Things that exist appear to be non-existent; and things that do not exist appear to be existent. The eternal Supreme Self appears non-existent and the transient body seems permanent. The individual self, who is never free and whose understanding is meagre, shines forth as entirely independent and all-knowing. He who can never become a saviour imagines that he can save himself. All this is contrarious or perverse knowledge; and this is night. But dawn enables sattvaguṇa, tendency to purity, to emerge triumphant. Its brightness helps to show things as they are. We directly perceive that we are acquiring true knowledge. Then we know for certain that our knowledge is infinitesimal; and that we are entirely dependent and not free at all; and that we cannot save ourselves. Mārgaśīrṣa is instinct with that supreme strength of sattvaguṇa; and it is up to us to welcome and glorify the advent of such an auspicious

month and in particular the day on which our minds are oriented towards God.

Notice this secret in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa. 'Mārga' means 'a way'; a means to attain God. Different ways are suggested to people in different stages of spiritual endeavour.

Karmayōga .. Action without expecting reward
(Niṣkāmakarma)

Jñānayōga .. Realisation of self.

Bhaktiyōga .. Devotion to God.

None of these ways can, in reality, yield the fruit sought, namely, taking us to God. They are useful to the extent that they can turn God's grace to flow towards us. God alone should give Himself to us. This is the established truth of Upanishads. Mārgaśīrṣa, which means the greatest of the ways, instils in us this faith that *God alone is the means to attain God*. Hence, the significance and importance of Mārgaśīrṣavratam.

This rite is also known as Dhanurmāsavrata. In the language of the Upanishads "Dhanus" means Praṇava or Omkāra; and this is the word by which God is known. The Upanishads declare that only meditation with the utterance of 'Om' leads us to the Supreme Self.

*"Om ityātmānam yunjīta
Om ityātmānam dhyāyatha"*

It is Om that yields the meaning that the individual self (jīva) belongs to the Supreme Self (Paramātmā) and to none else. By concentrated meditation on Om, the idea that God alone is the means of reaching Him becomes strengthened. That is the end and aim of Dhanurmāsavratam.

With the advent of moonlit nights and with the upsurge of godliness, the desire to join the company of devout people springs up. This desire turns into an agonising search for a preceptor (an Āchārya) and ends in Samāśrayaṇam, dedicated and devoted service, to him. Through his grace, the self realises its own nature and becomes worthy of experiencing God. This order of growth is indicated in the mention of Mārgaśīrṣa month, moonlit fortnight and auspicious day.

Mārgaśīrṣa is the time when the tendency to purity surges up. The moon is the preceptor. The moonlight is the true knowledge of the self that has radiated from him. God-experience is like the brilliance of the sun; its heat cannot be endured. When sun's light falls on the moon and gets reflected, it loses its burning quality and becomes refreshing and enjoyable. In the same way, when God-experience flows through the preceptor and reaches the disciple it loses its consuming effulgence and becomes mellowed into enjoyable experience. Normally, the individual self forgets his true nature, becomes attached to the body and gets involved in the consuming ills caused by physical ailments (ādhyātmika), by the fury of wild beasts and venomous creatures (ādhibhoutika), and by the frown of the elements (ādhidaivika), and becomes broken-hearted. But the gracious light which radiates from the preceptor falls on him; it enables him to recognise his true nature, that his soul is different from his body. The grace of the preceptor represents the moonlight that fills the night with brightness. The day on which this self-knowledge shines, urging him to aspire for eternal union with God and to consecrate all his activities to God's service, is for certain a very auspicious day, indeed. The gopikas rejoice that such an auspicious day has come into their lives.

2. "Nirāḍappōduvīr pōduminō

"Do come, all those who wish to have a bath."

Their wish is to get cooled of the heat generated in them by their separation from Kṛṣṇa. This bath therefore is not the external immersion in waters. It is to get united with Kṛṣṇa. In Dravidian tradition, the union of the lover and the beloved is deemed as a bath. "In the same way as a man parched in mid-summer heat immerses himself in the cool waters of a pond, I enter into God-consciousness." (Ēṣa Brahma Praviṣṭosmi grīṣmā Śītamiva hradaam). It is thus usual to compare the state of God-consciousness to a refreshing bath in cool waters. The man who takes a plunge into God-consciousness is cleansed of the triple evils (ādhyātmika, ādhibhoutika, ādhidaivika tāpamulu) that have so long consumed him. From that time, name and form, which separate him from the rest, lose their distinction. Kulasekhar Āḷwār has compared Śrī Kṛṣṇa to a lake: ("Kara-

charaṇa sarojē kāntimannētra mīnē, śramamuṣi bhujaṁvichī vyākulē
gādhā mārge Hari sarasi.”)

In Kṛṣṇa-lake, the Supreme Being's hands and feet are the lotus-flowers; His lustrous eyes are the fish; His shoulders are the waves. This lake is very deep; its waters are refreshing. Those who have journeyed through the desert of the life of non-self (Samsāra) take a dip in the refreshing waters of the Supreme Effulgence and get rid of fatigue. In a similar way, Śrī Bhattar enjoyed Śrī Ranganātha as a tank of blooming lotuses (Utphulla pankaja taṭākam). The Ālwārs regarded Śrī Rāmachandra as a pond presented by Daśaratha and made with diamonds and other precious stones. (marakata māṇikya taṭākam). In this way, God-experience is presented as a bath.

Though the gopikas are exhorted to come for a bath, nowhere in this scripture is it said that they have taken the bath. After all the gopikas gather, they meet Śrīkṛṣṇa and express to him their wish to remain with him for ever and serve him. The Scripture closes with the prayer that this wish be granted. Eternal union with Kṛṣṇa is the bath they have contemplated. In the Upanishads also, the Supreme Brahma is compared to an Ocean and the individual Jivas to rivers. Rivers lose their identity when they merge in the sea; so also the individual selves, who as adjuncts (upādhis) have acquired name (nāma) and form (rūpa), lose them as they glide into the Ocean of God. And this condition of merger, where it is not possible to show them as distinctly separate, is described as Liberation (Mokṣa) (Yathā nadyaḥ syandamānāḥ samudrē astham gacchanti nāma rūpē vihāya).

According to Dravidian tradition, only the elders are invited to bath with the respectful words, “nīrāḍa raṇḍu”. In calling upon their companions to join them for a bath, the gopikas employ the same respectful words, only to indicate that such respect is due even to friends, sons and disciples, when they are oriented towards God. Knowing that her son had earned the grace of God, Bhattar's mother respectfully accepted the sacred water consecrated at her son's feet. It is said that Mahāpūrṇa (Perianambi) himself used to greet first Śrī Rāmānuja with folded hands, although the latter was his disciple. When Perianambi was questioned why he was doing like this, he answered that Śrī Rāmā-

nuja appeared to him as his own guru, Śrī Āḷvandār (Yāmunāchārya). Perianambi forgot the fact that Śrī Rāmānuja was his disciple in the over-riding consideration that Śrī Rāmānuja earned, by his own merit, the greatest love of Śrī Yāmunāchārya and thus deserved all reverence. Instances like this reveal to us the way we have to conduct ourselves before the devotees of God.

Seeing how great worth is necessary to undertake sacrificial rites to secure the pleasures of heaven, which are after all transitory, we are likely to feel apprehensive about the merit to be attained in order to enjoy unbroken experience of God. But let no such fear be entertained. Worth may become necessary to acquire things that are not naturally connected with us. Here, the very *desire* to have the bath of God-experience is enough to make us worthy of it, as kinship with God accrues as a birthright to us. And there is no means of getting that experience. It comes only if Bhagavān graciously grants it. This desire, every conscious individual self should have; it is his duty to turn his desires from unworthy objectives and direct them towards God. He has allowed his desires to drift so long because of lack of will. The moment he wills it, he gains the qualification to move towards God. Though we lack in strength, God who is strength (Śakti), Fulfilment (Prāpti), and Fulness (Pūrṭi) supplies our wantings and enables us to attain Him. To enjoy mean desires we need privacy. But to enjoy the limitless experiences with God (the Spouse Divine) we need company. Hence it is that the gopikas invite all to join in the quest with the words "Come and go ahead." It looks as though the gopikas feel that their lives become fulfilled more by observing the beauty of the gait of those who walk before them than by their attaining the Supreme Being Himself.

3. "Nēṟṟai Yīr"

In addressing the gopikas as those wearing strange ornaments, there is some significance. As the gopikas get ready to come out to join others in the street, their bodies glow with gladness as though they put on new ornaments. Now that an opportunity has come to them to share openly with others what has till then been an experience confined to each one of them, they are filled with tears of joy and thrills of body; their knowledge and devotion increase along with detachment from things mundane. This

new glow that has come over them is their peculiar outstanding ornament. The beloved approaches her lover bedecked with ornaments. In the same way, the devotee approaches the Lord decorating himself with the ornaments of knowledge, devotion and renunciation. Were it a normal bath, people would divest themselves of their ornaments. This bath is different, hence they put on their most dazzling ornaments!

4. “*Śir malgu māyppāḍi ccelvacciṟumīrgāḷ.*”

The call goes to the prosperous and wealthy girls in the village. The village is full of prosperity, abounding in rich harvests and plentiful milk. With the advent of Kṛṣṇa, material prosperity has, of course, increased thousand fold. Not only that, there is a spurt in godliness as well. Prosperity is two-fold: material and spiritual. In both ways, the village has recorded phenomenal progress with Kṛṣṇa in residence. After Bhagavān manifested Himself there, the people could not find leisure as their whole time was taken up with drawing milk or churning curds. They were getting as much ghee now as they were getting milk before, after Kṛṣṇa's advent to the village. (“Yadācha Kṛṣṇa udbhūtaḥ tadā prabhṛti.. Yāvaddugdham samudbhūtam tāvadēva ghṛtam bhavēth.”)

Bhagavān in Paramapada or Vaikuṇṭha was like a lamp in bright daylight. He was shorn of brilliance as there was no opportunity for Him there to show His shining qualities. No wicked there, hence no occasion for considerateness (Vātsalya). No sinners there, hence no need to show forbearance (Kṣhama). No sorrowing people there, hence no room to display compassion (daya). No mean inferiors there, hence no opportunity to reveal graciousness (sousīlya). As all those in Vaikuṇṭha are fully realised souls, with no desires outstanding fulfilment, His qualities of Omnipotence (sarvaśaktitvam), Omniscience (sarvajñyatvam) and Absolute Volition (satyasankalpam) remain unmanifest. But in the village of the cowherds, He shines forth in exceptional splendour. All His qualities dazzle as a bright light in darkness, as the people there are wicked, mean, sorrowing, sinful!

In another sense, too, this Vṛēpalle is superior to Vaikuṇṭha. People cannot reach Paramapada (Heavenly Abode) unless they

leave their bodies behind and assume subtle forms. This Vrēpalle is different. Even Śrī Rāma's Ayodhya cannot claim parity with it. Sages like Vaṣiṣṭha, who led lives on the lines prescribed by scriptures (śāstras) resided there. But here, the simple, unlettered cowherds, who cannot distinguish the right hand from the left, have enjoyed the company of Kṛṣṇa. The people of Ayodhya knew that Śrī Rāma never hungered for other women; they perceived his excellent qualities in his deeds and loved him. The people of Vrēpalle noticed in Kṛṣṇa qualities like mischievousness, thievishness and promiscuousness in dalliance; and yet they could not live apart from him, nor avoid loving him, even because they considered them as sportive childish pranks meant for their amusement and edification.

The ample richness of the village is outlined above. Wherein does the wealth of the girls lie? Nothing outstanding, if reckoned in material terms. But vastly rich in terms of the spirit! The permanent wealth of the individual lies in his soul's intimate contact with God. Born in the village of Vrēpalle among simple cowherds, the young girls are imbued with the conviction that they belong to Kṛṣṇa and none else; and that conviction is their spiritual wealth. And girls of such conviction alone are invited to participate in the ritual. Though located in this mundane world, Vrēpalle is capable of providing full experience of God, even because the Supreme Self, who is the Embodiment of Knowledge and Bliss, has incarnated there as a cowherd. All men and old women, though born in that village and in the community of the cowherds, have been excluded from participation in this ritual. Because they have not developed the conviction that they belong to God and the aspiration to enjoy Him alone and no other. The desire of the gopikas to surrender completely to the control of Kṛṣṇa and to be enjoyed by him gives them their youth and femininity. And this aspiration and endeavour to realise it constitutes their wealth.

Gajendra had this wealth when he cried in agony that God alone was the saviour and there was no other way of getting protection. Hence it is that Gajendra is called "Śrīmanta," possessor of wealth. ("satunāgavara Śrīmān.") Leaving the kingdom of Lanka, deserting wife and children, Vibhīṣaṇa goes to Rāma with faith that he is the All-in-all, and stands before him

in mid-air. Vālmīki describes him thus: “Antarikṣa gataḥ Śrīmān.” This aspiration to attain the Supreme alone is true wealth; and the young women of Vr̥ṣpalle have this wealth in plenty.

Four qualities seem to be necessary for the participants in this Vrata:

- (i) Simplicity of conviction (gollatanamu): The belief that the experience of God-consciousness is wholly due to the grace of God and not owing to any effort on their part to love Him.
- (ii) Femininity: (Strītvamu) The sense of belonging to God and the determination to regulate their conduct according to His dictates.
- (iii) Youth: (paḍuchutanamu) Keen consciousness that they deserve to be enjoyed by God alone and by no other.
- (iv) Plenitude: (Sampannata) Aspiration and endeavour to concentrate the mind on God) as the All-in-all, and ignoring everything else.

Men are excluded as unworthy because they assume an attitude of independence; and old women because they have sought enjoyment elsewhere, leaving out Kṛṣṇa.

5. “*Kūrvēl koḍundoḷilan Nandagōpan kumaran*”

Kṛṣṇa is the son of Nandagopa, who out of his eager solicitude for the safety of Kṛṣṇa keeps ever alert, with his Velāyudha (Spear) poised to punish severely those who intend harm to Kṛṣṇa.

To obviate doubts whether they would be able to go for the bath and if so under whose guidance, they declare that Kṛṣṇa will undertake to lead them to success in it. Whether Kṛṣṇa is accessible and how to get at him are the doubts that they now attempt to resolve. Kṛṣṇa obeys Nandagopa. To Nandagopa, life's pilgrimage consists only in pronouncing benediction on Kṛṣṇa (mangaḷa śāsanam). Before the birth of Kṛṣṇa, Nandagopa hesitated to set foot on the tender grass for fear that it would get crushed. But now, to protect Kṛṣṇa from possible danger, he does not hesitate to do any thing; even if an ant dares to approach

Kṛṣṇā's manger, he rushes forward with his sharp spear, Velāyudha, to kill it. As things sentient and insentient have assumed demoniac fervour to bring Kṛṣṇa into danger, Nandagopa has made it his business to suspect everything here and take the necessary precaution. It is this anxious solicitude that is considered in devotion-tradition as the highest climax which love can reach—love that forgets itself to such an extent as to attempt to protect the all-powerful Supreme. Violence is ordinarily forbidden; but in sacrificial rites it is considered meritorious. In a similar way, hurting others for selfish ends is sin. But violence done out of love for God and in solicitude for His safety is no violence. "In this world whatever is done for selfish ends becomes a sin; but if it is done for God, it becomes a meritorious deed." "manni-mittam kṛtam pāpam puṇyameva bhaviṣyati." "Nandagopa": He is Nanda because he is filled with ānanda or bliss, born of his vision of God. He is gopa (Protector) because, moved by love for Him, he is ever alert in protecting Him. Kṛṣṇā is the obedient son of such Nandagopa. So if the gopikas win Nandagopa's favour, he will awaken Kṛṣṇa and make him over to them. Whatever mischievous prank he plays, Kṛṣṇa sneaks away when he approaches his father, Nandagopa. When the villagers go to Nanda and level charges against him, Kṛṣṇa behaves before his father with such docility and innocence that those who have indicted him feel ashamed of their hastiness in complaining against him. This Nandagopa who is always engaged in pronouncing benediction on God, who is revelling in the bliss born of his having the possession of God, who is ever alert in devising means of protection of God, verily fills the place of *Āchārya*, Preceptor. It is an equal admixture of knowledge and love in such people that fills them with bliss and earnest solicitude for God. The *Āchārya* feels elated for the Divine experience vouchsafed to him and conceals it from others and protects it from the enemies. To such a preceptor, the Supreme Self shows implicit obedience as a son does to his father. Upadeśa Mudra—the special posture of the thumb and fore-finger of the preceptor's right palm, while giving instruction to disciples—is his velāyudha or spear, with which he carefully protects the subtle phenomenon of the Supreme Being. It is a very sharp weapon, its edge made keen alike by the knowledge gained from Scriptures and Śāstras, by the instruction received from the preceptors, and by the spiritual experiences

attained through God-consciousness. With that weapon of *Upadeśamudra*, he severely punishes such enemies to spiritual experiences as;

- (1) the attitude that he is his own saviour;
- (2) the belief that he is independent; and
- (3) the thought that he belongs to others.

6. *Ērārnda kaṇṇi Yaśodai Yīlañciṅgam* "

Kṛṣṇa 'is the lion-cub of his mother Yaśoda, whose eyes are filled with beauty.' Kṛṣṇa whom we are trying to attain is the son of our Yaśoda, who keeps her eyes always on him, and, as a result, Kṛṣṇa's beauty has become permanently lodged in her eyes. Yaśoda cannot live without seeing him. At the same time, she is afraid of setting her eyes always on him. She is proud of being his mother. When Kṛṣṇa returns home after indulging in mischievous pranks, she is moved by different feelings of joy and anger; and then her eyes shine with new beauty. All the acts of the child, even if mischievous, please the mother, even because she always wishes the child priyam, every happiness. So even though she sometimes affects anger, she does not wish to punish him. That is why Kṛṣṇa frisks about like a lion-cub in the presence of his mother. The father, on the other hand, wishes hitam, good, to his child; and so punishes lapses in him. That is why Kṛṣṇa's behaviour before his father is all submission. Here, this distinction is brought out by referring to Kṛṣṇa as the "son of Nandagopa" and as "the lion-cub of Yaśoda."

If Nandagōpa is Āchārya (Preceptor), Yaśoda is Mantra (ritualistic incantation); and the latter is always under the control of the former.

Eye: (Kaṇ) means knowledge (Jñāna); that is, ability to understand a thing as it is. Beauty of knowledge lies in its breadth and not in narrowness. Yaśoda possesses such expansive eyes that she is capable of giving to those that cling to her complete and true knowledge. Bliss alone is beauty. Kṛṣṇa is that Bliss. That knowledge which enables one to see Kṛṣṇa is considered beautiful knowledge. Yaśoda possesses such beautiful knowledge; and her broad and beautiful eyes are expressive of it. She is the

incantation (Mantra). Those who chant and contemplate it are blessed with noble birth (Ābhijātyam), affluence (Aiśwarya) and divinity (apavarga) and such other excellences. She is called Yaśoda, even because she gives Yaśa, reputation. This incantation (Yaśoda) has carried in its womb the Supreme Self in His true form and with all His auspicious qualities unsullied; and made Him visible to others in all His splendour. That is how incantation becomes the mother, and the preceptor becomes the father. ("Mantro mātā guruḥ pitā") The Supreme is submissive before the preceptor, but He roams about freely in the incantation. "Let us therefore go to Nanda and Yaśoda who are capable of giving us Lord Kṛṣṇa." Now they describe the external features and the essential nature of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

7. "*Kārmēni cceṅgaṇ kadir madiyampōl mugattān*"

"He has a body, dark as a cloud. His eyes resemble red lotus petals. His face shines like the sun and the moon." Cloud absorbs consuming heat and yields life-giving showers. Kṛṣṇa whose favour we are going to seek in this rite has a body that can quench our consuming passion. He possesses a beauty that can satiate our irrepressible love and remove the agony caused by the emaciating separation from him. Like the cloud, he is both the end (Upēya) and the means of reaching it (Upāya). He is both the object and the help to attain it. He has the two qualities usually associated with the cloud. He is the only means by which the heat generated by the life of the nonself (saṃsāra) is cooled off. Once this agony is eliminated, He presents Himself before us so that we may behold Him always as do the Ever-wise (sadā paśyanti sūrayaḥ). To those who approach God with an irrepressible urge, what is most needed is God's considerateness (Vātsalya). This friendly attitude of the Supreme is revealed by His divinely auspicious form, His bright eyes and His beaming face. That is why these three features are marked out for praise.

Graciousness is as much a characteristic of a cloud as absorption of heat. It makes no distinction between those who seek its favour and those who do not. Its nature is to rescue all those who suffer from heat. It is the same with the divinely auspicious form of Śrīkrṣṇa. Those eyes of his add lustre to

his body. The redness in his eyes indicates the considerateness that lies unseen in him. It suggests that he has suffered greater agony on account of separation from them and that he has kept sleepless vigil for long nights looking for them. This redness in the eye is a symbol of the Supreme. It also indicates that the eyes are like the petals of white lotus. Just as a man of wealth weeps day and night without sleep when he loses it, our Lord has wept for us and his eyes bear witness to his grief. That divine face glows with mellow light and appears easily accessible to those who seek His favour; while it blinds with dazzling brilliance and shows itself inaccessible to those who do not want Him. The same face thus shows refreshing coolness to friends and forbidding brightness to enemies. When seated in the court of Duryodhana, Kṛṣṇa is described as having a face resembling the mellowed sun. He is sun, no doubt, but sun very much mellowed, with a refreshing and enjoyable radiance. By describing Kṛṣṇa as having a body like a dark cloud, two of his qualities are shown—his goodness (Souṣīlya) and his easy accessibility (Soulabhya). By picturing him with red-shot eyes, his considerateness (Vātsalya) and ownership (swāmitva)—two more of his characteristics—are indicated. It appears easy to seek refuge in a Supreme that has these qualities. Those who realise that they can easily approach him seek his favour with confidence that, with his knowledge and strength and other excellences, he is capable of accomplishing what they are in need of.

8. “*Nārāyaṇāṇē namakkē parai taruvān.*”

“Nārāyaṇa alone can give the “parai” (the instrument required for the ritual) and he will give it *only to us.*”

Even the gopikas who lack worldly wisdom could recognise that Kṛṣṇa is Nārāyaṇa. Their elders have instructed them that whatever they have done and in whatever danger they find themselves, they get relief by chanting the name of ‘Nārāyaṇa.’ Recitation of this incantation is introduced as an adjunct to the ritual.

The greatness of Kṛṣṇa-incarnation lies in this: He appears so easy to get at; at the same time, even ordinary people believe that he is God Himself. Even ignorant people and women could determine from his superhuman actions, like sucking Pootana’s

life out and raising the mountain (Govardhanagiri) aloft on his little finger—miracles beyond human capacity—that Śrīkṛṣṇa is Īswara, Lord of all. By declaring that it is Nārāyaṇa *only* that they are seeking as a means to accomplish their rite, they suggest that He is the one to whom they are naturally related.

The word "Nārāyaṇa" means One who resides for ever in all lasting things; and also One who is the sustainer of all. "From this, it is clear that whether we are inclined towards Him or not, He will never desert us; on the other hand, He will save us from danger and absorb us into Himself. It is our good fortune that we seek favour of Him with whom we have natural kinship; it is easy to do so; and we can be certain that He will provide us with the means for the fulfilment of our rite.

Again, emphasising that Nārāyaṇa *alone* can help, is to declare that none else can be the instrument. It is a folly to imagine that lifeless rituals can become effective means. All that they can do is to please the Supreme; they cannot yield fruits. It is God alone who can become the effective instrument to fulfil the ends. Let us therefore give up all other means and seek only His favour. He will then give the "Paṇai" to us only."

Although all are equal in His sight, He becomes the means only to those who, like us, have knowledge of their natural kinship with Him; and who, without seeking other sources and without making any effort to save themselves, surrender themselves entirely to Him as the only means of fulfilment. It is to declare this fact that emphasis is laid on "to us only" he will give 'Paṇai.' 'Paṇai' is a drum which cowherds fasten to their bosoms and play on, while singing and dancing. It is an essential instrument for this ritual of the bath; and the gōpikas go on asking for it till the 28th Pāsuram (Hymn). This 'paṇai' represents the means to the highest end (parama puruṣārtha).

Bath itself connotes lasting union with the Divine; and to attain it, this instrument of 'Paṇai' is helpful. This 'Paṇai' signifies the three activities of the mind, tongue and body. The instrument is fastened near the heart to indicate the activity of the mind; it is played on with the hands to show the activity of the body; in tune with the sound produced, the gōpikas sing and that points to the activity of the tongue. And all these three

types of activity are oriented towards Kṛṣṇa (Kṛṣṇā paramulu); that is why the instrument is called 'Paṇai.' Not only that, they are to remain in inseparable contact with him in the future and render soul-deep service to him. That is the final aspiration in undertaking this rite.

9. "*Pārōr puḡaiṇ paḍindē/ōrempāvāy*"

"Join in this rite in such a way that the onlookers will praise us."

The gōpikas have no interest in getting gain or fame or other benefits in doing worship. Their only objective is union with Kṛṣṇa. There is some fine idea behind their call inviting people to join in the rite so as to make all onlookers happy. Praise flows from happiness. Their wish seems to be that the elders who, lacking knowledge of self, objected to their contacts with Kṛṣṇa previously, should become happy with the termination of drought and the advent of rain after which they are hankering. This wish is in keeping with the attitude of devotees.

Devotees, who approach the Lord, ardently wish happiness and fulfilment of desires even to those who have blocked their experience of God. They do not hate them as enemies who have obstructed their endeavours to enjoy God. Though they have now the opportunity, they will not take revenge on them. They do not look down upon them either, treating them as people who merely run after mean material objectives. On the other hand, they wish them all happiness and fulfilment of their desires. It is not for fame that they entertain such attitude towards them. It lies in the very nature of those who have experienced God.

The objective of this rite is the Bath, the bath of God-experience. The man who is exposed to the hot rays of the sun in mid-summer takes a deep plunge into the cool waters of a pool for relief; he is so deeply immersed in the waters that his form and name cannot be separately distinguished. In a similar way, the man who is consumed by the severe miseries of worldly life plunges for relief into Śrīmannārāyaṇa, the embodiment of all auspicious qualities such as love, friendliness, goodness and easy accessibility. The bath is complete when he loses his identity and finds his true self in God-experience.

To attain the fruit of this rite, the qualification needed is the desire to take the bath. The means to secure the objective is Nārāyaṇa Himself; and Nārāyaṇa becomes the means *only to the gōpikas*; that is, to those who, like the gōpikas, seek no means other than Kṛṣṇa. Thus, the objective of the rite, the qualifications required for the participants, the means of accomplishing the rite and to whom the means becomes available, are succinctly indicated in this hymn.

This rite may be deemed as God's worship extending over thirty days. The Āgamas declare that the nature of God assumes five forms, *para*, *vyūha*, *vibhava*, *antaryāmi* and *archa*. Śrīman-nārāyaṇa whose form is Truth-Knowledge-Bliss and who is the Prime Cause and who is called *Sat* (Being or Existence) is the Para Brahma or the Supreme Phenomenon. This Para Tattwa shines in four Vyūhās (Quiescent forms) for the purposes of creation (Sṛṣṭhi), maintenance (Sthiti), destruction (laya), liberation (mōkṣa), dissemination of the Vedas (Vēda pravartana). These four Vyūhas are called *Vāsudēva*, *Sankarṣaṇa*, *Pradyumna* and *Aniruddha*. The nature of Vāsudēva is the unequalled expression of six qualities—knowledge (Jñāna), might or strength (Bala), affluence and sovereignty (aisvarya), Puissance and vigour (vīrya) power (śakti) and effulgence (tējas) in all their completeness. As nothing excels this in form and in qualities, it is called Supreme Vāsudēva Tattwa. This is the complete unexcelled form in Vaikunṭha that liberated souls worship. The other three Vyūhas—Sankarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha—emerge, for specific purposes, as a result of combining two of the six qualities enumerated above in their unexcelled form. One of these forms lies on the milk-sea and when necessity arises manifests in the world as incarnations. The word 'Bhagava' means the six qualities mentioned above; and He who possesses them is Bhagavān. Each of the three letters Bha, ga, va indicates two of the above qualities; the letter An stands for mean qualities; and 'na' means 'No' or the negative. Thus the word Bhagavān has come to mean One who has all the auspicious qualities and no mean qualities; that is the Supreme Brahman. Our duty lies in worshipping this Para Brahma only. But this Paratattwa as expressed in supreme vyūhās is beyond our reach. That is the reason why the Supreme takes an incarnation at suitable times in order to provide an opportunity to the ardent devotees who pine for Him to vision His form. Śrī Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa are such incar-

nations; and they manifest His Vibhava or glory. But such incarnations manifest themselves at some time and in some place and disappear. They are thus inaccessible to people of other times and other places. In order to be readily available to all who wish to worship, this Bhagavat tattwa (God-phenomenon) becomes immanent in every atom of a being and resides in the inmost heart. Worshippers need not go anywhere; they are helped to find Him in themselves as the Immanent One. Bhagavān makes Himself still more easily accessible to his devotees, enabling them to worship Him with their external senses, by residing in the different concrete forms of images or idols reared by them, each after his own heart. This is Archāvatāra. Among all these modes, Paratattwa is like water in sweet-water sea, which lies invisible somewhere. It is true that it exists; but it cannot be of use; it does not quench the thirst of those who are parched here and now. *Vyūha* is like water in the clouds. It is not readily available to drink. Only when the cloud discharges itself in rain and takes shape as a river does it come within our reach and satiate the thirst. The Incarnations are like river-waters; they flood during rainy season, but shrink away or dry up in summer when we badly need them. So to the man who suffers from parching heat, these three modes do not provide relief; they are beyond the reach of his experience. The form of Immanence is like water in the bowels of the earth; it will be useful only if it is brought out by digging the earth. This is not easy for all. Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa has propounded in the Gīta: "I shall receive every devotee in the form and in the manner in which he worships me." ("Yē yathā mām prapadyantē tām sthādhaiva bhajāmyaham.") Be it a sage (Jñāni), or a devotee (Bhakta), be it a man in agony for lost possessions (Ārti) or one hungering for new wealth (Arthārthi), whatsoever form or mode of worship is adopted by him, God graciously appears before him in all His fulness in the form chosen by him and fulfils his prayers. Such facility is there in Idol-Worship (Archāmūrti). The earlier forms of worship are beyond reach. It is easy to render worship to God in the form of an Image. By doing this, they will be deemed to have done the other modes of worship also and become worthy of attaining the Supreme in the Heavenly Abode. In the Archāmūrti, God, who is so easily accessible to devotees, stands with all His attributes in full splendour. Hence those who worship It attain the same fruits as those that adore

Abstract Summary. This is what Gōdādēvi has proved in this Vrata and in her way of life.

She has worshipped the Lord in the temple of Śrīvilliputtūr. In serving Him she has kept in mind the way the gōpikas served Kṛṣṇa. She has, at the same time, adored the Supreme Self who is immanent in the inmost recess of her heart. She has demonstrated all these three modes of worship, and the result achieved is unbroken union with God and eternal service to Him. Thus has she attained the highest end of life (Parama puruṣārtha). In the hymn, we see how all the preparations are made in their day by gōpikas in Nandavraja to reach Kṛṣṇa in the month of Mārgaśīrṣa. We see also how Āṇḍā, like a gōpika, makes her own preparations to go to the presence of Śrī Vāṭapatraśāyi in Śrīvilliputtūr. In this hymn, we see, as well, how a devotee who adores the Immanent Being develops a taste for God-union during the upsurge of his tendency for purity, and goes to a preceptor and attains self-knowledge; and ascertains from him whom and how he should attain and begins the particular mode of worship. This great Tiruppāvai ritual finds a synthesis in Archāmūrti (the form of Idol) of all kinds of worship and of the three means of fulfilment, Karma (action), Jñāna (knowledge) and Bhakti (devotion).

*“ Pātakaṅgaḥ tirkum, parama naḍikāṭṭum
Vēda manaittukkum vittāgum ”*

This Tiruppāvai removes sins and discovers the lotus-feet of the Supreme Being. It is glorified as the succinct essence of the main secrets of all the Vedas, presented in a simple manner so as to be within reach of common people. Things beyond normal reach are made easily available even to ignorant men and women. Those who do not learn these thirty hymns and perform this rite are a burden to the earth

“ Kōdai tamil aiyaṇdu maindum

Ariyāda mānīdarai vaiyam sumappadam vambu ”

This Vrata is of thirty days' duration. It is presented as covering three stages. The first stage is a preface giving an idea of the nature and form of the Vrata (ritual); and this is covered by five hymns (1 to 5). The second stage, covered by the next

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ten hymns (6 to 15) shows how the young girls from different homes are roused from sleep and taken into company. The third stage is marked by the remaining half of the hymnal (16 to 30) in which Nanda, Yaśoda, Nīla, Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa are severally roused from sleep; and the gōpikas after making known their wish become united with Kṛṣṇa. The moon that is separated from the sun gradually earns beam after beam of light, becomes full, and then slowly merges into him; and this takes a month. Similar is the case with the individual self in relation to the Supreme. The number 'thirty' indicates that there are three daśas (stages) in this vrata (rite); 1. Sādhana or endeavour; 2. Anveṣaṇa or quest; and 3. Anubhava or experience. Again, this 30-day vrata also suggests the fulfilment of the three aspects of the soul's aspiration; (Ananya śēṣatva) to be the possession of none else than God; (Ananya bhōgyatva) to be enjoyed by none else than God; (Ananya śaraṇatva) to seek refuge in none else than God.

Thus does this Vrata transmit the profound secrets of spiritual life in a manner that is easily understood by common people.



PĀŚURAM II

PREFACE

In the first Pāśuram, the gōpikas outlined 1. the objective of their ritual, namely, eternal union with God; 2. their qualification for undertaking it: an intense longing for that union; 3. the means availed of for attaining the object, Kṛṣṇa himself. They have launched upon the ritual with full knowledge and conviction that the end pursued by them is laudable and worthwhile, that they have the capacity to push through the ritual to the end, and that Kṛṣṇa is there to equip them with the implements needed for success in their attempt.

In this second Pāśuram, they dwell upon the rules to be observed for the duration of the ritual, the things to be done and the things to be avoided. Rules are prescribed for participants, only to make them pure and fit. The gōpikas who firmly believe in God, both as their goal and as their means, and relish serving Him, are under no such obligation to observe them. Still, they adhere to the code of conduct, prescribed in the ritual, only to enhance the plenitude of God's glory and the ecstasy of the devotees.

No object is inherently good; nor is it bad. Were it so, a good object remains good for ever and a bad object bad for all time. But such is not the case. All objects in the world are composed of the three guṇas (of purity, activity and inaction) and are subject to the changes of Prakṛti (primal nature). One accepts an object as good and welcomes it on one day; the same object, the same one rejects as bad on some other day. Thus goodness and badness are not inherent in the objects; but are determined by one's guṇas and regulated by individual karma (accumulated past actions). So their acceptance as good or rejection as bad, works alike and results in sorrow. All worldly things are delusive in nature and result in joy or sorrow. What gives joy today leads to sorrow tomorrow. Acceptance or rejection of worldly objects leads alike to sorrow. Possession of wealth or of wife and children results in as much grief as non-possession

of them; because joy and sorrow are not inherent in them. But the subject pertaining to God is different; it gives joy always and to all; because its goodness is inherent in the subject and does not change according to one's karma. That is why the gōpikas reject all mundane objects as insignificant, transient and odious. The only object that is inherently good, and remains good for ever and for all, and that leads only to happiness is that which is naturally related to God; and hence it is that they cling to God who is Eternal and Permanent, who is the Dispenser of bliss and the Possessor of all auspicious qualities.

*Vaiyattu vālvīr gāl ! nāmum nambāvaikkum
 cceyyuṅgiriṣaigaḷ Kēlirō, Pārkaḍaluḷ
 Paiyattuyinra Paramanaḍipāḍi
 neyyuṅṇōm Paluṅṇōm nātkālēnirāḍi
 maiyiṭṭeludōm malarīṭṭu nām muḍiyōm
 ṣeyyādana ṣeyyōm tikkuraḷai ccenrōdōm
 aiyaṁum piccāiyu māmdanaiyuṅgaikāṭṭi
 Uyyumāreṇṇi Yugandēlō rempāvāy*

Summary.

"All ye who, though born in this world of sorrow, yet enjoy bliss as contemporaries of Kṛṣṇa, listen to the manner of our performing this ritual. We shall gently sing benediction to the feet of the Supreme Person, who has been resting quietly on the sea of milk. During the period of the ritual, we shall take our bath before dawn. We shall not help ourselves to milk or ghee. We shall not smear our eyes with collyrium nor shall we deck our hair with flowers. We shall avoid actions not done by our elders; nor shall we ever utter anywhere falsehood or words that hurt others. We shall honour the wise with liberal gifts of grain and money. We shall bestow charity on the celibates and the ascetics. We shall always reflect upon the way of higher life. May you witness this and feel happy!"

This Pāsuram exhorts the intending participants about the things that they should or should not do during the course of the Vrata.

Commentary.

1. *Vaiyattu vāḷ vīr gāl!*

The gōpikas, born in the Nandavraja, are deemed as exceptionally fortunate maids, for theirs is the bliss of perennial Kṛṣṇa-consciousness. The Lord who is inaccessible has, by incarnating as Kṛṣṇa, facilitated to the lucky daughters of the village, easy access to Himself. In His Supreme State, the apprehension of God's supremacy alone gives happiness; and this is limited only to the enlightened wise. But here, the happiness of the devotee is mostly derived from understanding how God has been showing His humility. The Lord who is to receive the services of all becomes the lowliest of all and serves others. This facility is not available in His abode. Knowledge and bliss for the individual selves (jīvas) in this world become clouded under the influence of Avidya (nescience). But in Paramapada (Divine Abode) Jivas are free of the restrictions of Avidya; they blossom in full in their real nature; and their knowledge and bliss become limitless; and so they are able to enjoy the Absolute.

Moreover, there is little scope in His abode for His auspicious qualities to shine in full splendour; since those who dwell there are fully enlightened and realised souls. But here in Nandavraja, His auspicious qualities like clemency, forbearance and love find their full expression. That is why even liberated souls descend to this world to have that exhilarating experience. The gōpikas compliment themselves on their good luck. Living in this mundane world, where the intellect is liable to perish by the latent tendencies inclining to sense-enjoyments, the gōpikas are really blessed in their engrossment with Kṛṣṇa-consciousness. To have been born in the same village with Kṛṣṇa and at the same time, to have gained the eligibility to enjoy him by being young, and finally to have been accepted as deserving of his gracious love—how exceptionally fortunate are these village maidens! Though Āṇḍāl too is one of them, she finds the company of the others, similarly placed, quite exhilarating.

The released souls residing in the Divine Abode have felt a desolation during the incarnation of Kṛṣṇa on the earth, a desolation similar to that of (1) those residing in Ayōdhya after Śrī Rāma

left for the woods and (2) those residing in Mathura after Śrīkṛṣṇa left for Vṛpalle. In the absence of Nārāyaṇa, the Divine Abode itself looks a prison. The milk-maids consider attainment of Divine Abode unnecessary, when the Supreme Person has Himself descended to the earth and made Himself easily accessible to all the aspirants by showing His auspicious qualities in all their splendour. He has blessed them with knowledge of His real being and has enabled them to enjoy communion with Him. As this glorious experience is available in this world, they see no reason why they should think of the Heavenly Abode at all. They do not expect greater bliss there than here. It is true that His supremacy has no outer limit in the Beyond. It is equally true that His graciousness has no inner limit in this mundane world, either. While the latter is within the compass of experience, here and now, why hanker after the other world and its remote joys?

Hanumān provides a shining example of a devotee who is disinclined to go to the Divine Abode as is evident from his reply to Śrī Rāma on this question. "O King, my friendship abides in you for ever; and my devotion is confined to you alone. My thoughts refuse to stray away from you." Hanumān's love for Śrī Rāma is superior to Śrī Rāma himself. Even if he has to separate from Śrī Rāma, his love for him does not leave Śrī Rāma; and the root cause of this love is not Śrī Rāma's supremacy but his universal loveliness. Whoever sets eyes on Śrī Rāma—be he friend or foe, man or woman, wise man or fool—feels alike inexplicable bliss. To this spell Hanumān succumbs; and this attachment is not a fleeting experience; it abides as long as the soul exists. Hanumān's attachment is ripened into abiding devotion—devotion to Śrī Rāma alone—not to be shared by anyone else.

There is a distinction to be drawn between attachment and devotion. Daśaratha's attachment to Rāma is fondness; Lakṣmaṇa's, on the other hand, is devotion. When Śrī Rāma desired Daśaratha to stay in Ayōdhya and not to follow him to the forest, Daśaratha could not say anything in reply. He stopped, only to die, pining for Śrī Rāma. This is fondness. To the same injunction to keep back and not to accompany him, Lakṣmaṇa earnestly pleaded that life, even for a moment, was impossible for him without Rāma, and entreated Rāma to accept his service.

This is devotion. To know that separation from him is death and so to seek eternal contact with him is what is called devotion. Fondness is without this knowledge, and consequently, separation brings about death. In Hanumān both fondness and devotion are found in equal measure; in fact, the former is slightly stronger. His fondness is confined only to Śrī Rāma, and that too because of Rāma's loveliness and heroism. Hence his mind refuses to stray away from him. Such is his single-minded devotion to Śrī Rāma that his mind takes no cognisance of cults different from Śrī Rāmatattva; and his tongue refrains from even mentioning them as they are totally repugnant to him.

The fondness that the gōpikas exhibit for Kṛṣṇa during the period of his incarnation is similar to Hanumān's for Śrī Rāma. They are averse to the attainment of Paramapada, in as much as the happiness of intimate contact and communion with the Lord has been theirs, even while they are here below; and Paramapada does not hold out brighter prospects for this union. Hence it is that Āṇḍāl addresses them as those enjoying bliss, even while living in this mundane world, here and now.

In the first hymn, the call to join in the ritual seems to have been limited to the maidens of Vrēpalle only. In this Pāṣuram, however, the invitation is extended to all those in the universe who feel a taste for God-consciousness and yearn for salvation. To qualify for this participation, they should be blessed with human form and with long life, and be imbued with a relish for spiritual occupations, and a tendency to tread the path prescribed by scriptures and adopted by the elders through generations. These alone are capable of enjoying bliss even while living in the mundane world (Prakṛti maṇḍala) bound by the three fundamental qualities (guṇas). From this it is clear that spiritual exaltation is possible only in this world and nowhere else; and those who enjoy such bliss are naturally disinclined to go to the other worlds.

2. *Nāmun nampāvaikkuc ceyyuṅgiri saigaḷ kēlīrō!*

Now follows a catalogue of things that are to be done and of those that are to be avoided by the participants in the ritual. Unlike others, they do not declare that their ritual will bear fruit or that they will manage to bring it to fruition. They are of a strong

conviction that Lord Kṛṣṇa will himself make it fruitful. They are not atheists; nor are they mere theists in name. They are theists with complete faith in the subjects propounded by the scriptures and Śāstras. They do not claim that they form one part and God the other part of Reality. On the other hand, they have the conviction that God is All-in-all and is the Whole Reality.

Rākṣāsas (Demons) perform sacrificial rites with the aim of destroying God-phenomenon (Bhagavattattwa); and God's devotees, Dēvatas (celestials), too, perform rites keeping as their end the fulfilment of their selfish desires. The intention of gōpikas in performing this ritual is not to strike at God or godly men; but to invoke benediction on God and perpetuate His plenitude and to wish eternal bliss to His devotees. Thus this ritual is unique. Some of the gōpikas expound the details of the ritual, while the others listen to them. This does not imply that those who expound are knowing and the others ignorant. This they do, only because a mutual exchange of ideas concerning the ritual gives them pleasure.

When God Himself is both the means and the end, the doubt naturally arises as to why the gōpikas should have a programme of work to pursue. But the fact remains that till the aspiration is realised, they will have to act and cannot remain passive, even because they are sentient beings. Whatever they do, they do as a consecration to God; and so their actions cease to be means and become ends in themselves. As they are experiences of God-consciousness, they assume the form of fulfilment. It may here be noted that passivity is impossible to a sentient person; he cannot but be active. And if he is urged to do certain things, it is not because he believes that they will be effective instruments to secure the end; but it is because he wishes to attain fulfilment as speedily as possible. If a person makes no effort of his own and remains idle, in the belief that God Himself will manage to take him, it is clear that he has not fully understood the nature of Bhagavat tattwa. One who has gained knowledge of the true nature of God develops a taste for Him; and this taste leaves him no peace in separation from Him; and unable to endure delay in meeting Him, he does some thing or other which is in tune with his aspiration. We see what endeavours people are eager to make repeatedly, even when they become futile, to realise their abject ambitions

in the world. No wonder, then, that a devotee, who ardently aspires for the perfect God, *par excellence*, is constantly impelled by an urgency—that leaves him no respite—to do something towards the realisation of his objective, even if such efforts are futile. Though there is nothing that the gōpikas can do to augment the security, the plenitude or the glory of God, their agonising eagerness for such fulfilment drives them on to these efforts, like performing the ritual and observing certain principles in it. But such ritual-performance alone will not be an effective means to realise the end.

The gōpikas are beside themselves with joy that in the very place where they are strictly prohibited contact with Kṛṣṇa, they are now freely allowed to be with him. The call now goes to them: "Listen. To be contented at the very beginning with the freedom given to us is not enough. We must proceed apace till we attain the Lord. We relate to you the stories connected with this ritual and with Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa, not because you do not know them, not because we presume to know better about them; nor do we usurp the place of the preceptor and discharge his duty of expounding them. We do so simply because it is the duty of devotees to enlarge upon them for mutual benefit. We feel that tongues reach fulfilment in discoursing on them; and ears find fulfilment in listening to them." After completing Mahābhārata consisting of over a lakh of verses and expounding in full all the four objectives of Dharma (Right conduct) Artha (pursuit of wealth) Kāma (Pursuit of Desire) and Mōkṣa (attainment of release), Vyāsa enquires a listener which of these objectives has appealed to his mind. Out comes the reply that these four objectives have failed to make any impression. They are insipid. They are not the objectives worthy of pursuit. Higher than these, is the obligation to hear the stories of Hari. That alone is the highest objective (Puruṣārtha) worthy of pursuit. To one who has fallen under the spell of God's auspicious characteristics, nothing is more refreshing to the heart than listening to the stories of God, particularly when the narration is done by no less a sage than Vyāsa. That alone is the noblest objective.

In a similar strain, the gōpikas are exhorted to listen to the salient features of the ritual; listening itself is regarded as the only objective worthy of pursuit.

3. *Pārkaḍaḷ paiyattuyiṇṇa parama naḍi pāḍi*

Let us sing benediction to the feet of the Supreme Person who is quietly resting on the Sea of Milk.

In the previous Pāsuram Āṇḍāl has stated that Nārāyaṇa Himself will give the “parai”, the musical instrument needed in the ritual; and that He is none else than Kṛṣṇa, the Son of Nandagōpa, the lion-cub of Yaśōda. It is to be understood that the Supreme Phenomenon (Paratattwa), the Parapuruṣa lying on the ocean of milk (Śrīmannārāyaṇa), the Immanent one in all creation, Lord Śrīkṛṣṇa, and the adored Idol (Vaṭapatra śāyi) in Srivilliputtūr—are all one and the same in the view of the gopikas. Now in this pāsuram, Āṇḍāl says that at the outset they should sing benediction to the same Nārāyaṇa who lies still on the sea of milk, absorbed in His concern for providing protection to His creation. He is immanent in every object of creation; at the same time, He has enfolded within Himself the whole of His creation. In the same way as a peasant raises a hut adjacent to his farm and resides there to protect the harvest raised on it, the Lord has, in deference to the prayers of Brahma and other celestials (dēvatas), made Ananta His bed and laid Himself on him in order to protect the universe which He has created. He keeps ever alert so as to obviate delay in responding to the cries of supplicants in agony. He lies gently and still on Ananta, reluctant to make any movement or change in posture, lest the cries of the needy should go unheard and unheeded. He does not bear to exchange even a word or two with his consorts, Lakṣmi and Bhūdevi. He is the Supreme Puruṣa apparently inert but distinctly alert. Of all the forms adored by the devotees, that of the Supreme Person in the lying posture is the highest. Beauty is at its maximum radiance in this posture; and those who have witnessed it appear to have lost themselves in ecstasy to a greater degree than those who merely enjoyed His form in other postures of standing, sitting or walking.

Viśvāmitra, who had complete self-mastery, was so much bewitched with the beauty of the sleeping Rāmachandra that he forgot the business on hand; and instead of rousing him from sleep began praising him: “Kausalyā Suprajā Rāmā. How exceptionally fortunate is Kausalya to have brought forth such a charming child!” This is something similar to a hungry man who,

fascinated by the flavour and appearance of the menu served, forgets to eat and begins to praise the dresser of the victuals. The exceptional grace of Rāma's sleeping form has diverted Visvāmitra's attention from the immediate purpose and led him to praise the fortunate mother, Kausalya. Again, it is relevant here to refer to what Sīta observed when, with her bosom lacerated by a crow, she was obliged to cause disturbance to Rāma who was sleeping with his head resting on her lap.

Samayā bodhitāḥ Śrīmān sukha sūptāḥ parantapaḥ

Sīta is fascinated by the pile of resplendent beauty (Rāma) sleeping soundly on her lap and extols him for all his splendour. She goes a little further in complimenting him that, even while in sound sleep, he inspires his enemies with scorching fear. When such is the case, she regrets that she has disturbed him quite unnecessarily.

The gōpikas feel that their primary duty is to chant the benediction to the feet of the Supreme Person who charms the world by his beauty and brings it under His control, and whose alertness in protecting the world takes the form of yogic poise. He is the Puruṣōttama, the Supreme Person; and the yogic stillness is appropriate to Him. The gōpikas are women; and it is in keeping with their nature that the moment they know Him they should prostrate at His feet and chant the benediction with love and declare that they belong to Him only.

The foremost act in this ritual is the chanting of benediction to the feet of the Supreme Person. This is exactly what we should do always. The sea of milk is the ever-flowing stream of God's auspicious qualities. He who is filled with the pile of those qualities is the Supreme Person. That He lies on Śeṣa with His mind centred on the protection of the universe underscores the fact of His having penetrated it and made it His own; and of His alert waiting for an opportunity to offer it protection. There is, in fact, no need of our prayers to such a One to save us. The moment we understand the real nature of the Supreme Person, that very moment have we risen from our sleep; and the very first thing to do thereafter is to sing His benediction. The recognition that He is our lord and that we are His own servants is followed immediately by an inner urge of love which finds spontaneous expression in a song of benediction that He should remain for ever happy and blessed.

4. *Nēyyuṇṇōm pālunṇōm*

“ We do not consume ghee: we do not drink milk.”

That is as much as to say, that the gōpikas do not accept things that sustain the body. Fasting is an essential adjunct to every ritual. The idea behind it seems to be that by showing their famished bodies the devotees expect to melt the heart of God. When Śrī Rāma was in the forest of Dandakā, the Ṛṣis assembled before him; and showing their emaciated bodies, mangled by the Rākṣasas, bemoaned their misfortune that Rāma ceased to be their protector (*Ehi pasya śarīrāṇi*). Moved by the pitiable sight, Rāma assured them of his protection. The gōpikas intend following this example. They know the nature of Kṛṣṇa's love. They believe that if they give up food, Kṛṣṇa cannot endure their starving; and so will hasten to fulfil their purpose. If they fast, their bodies may famish but the agony of starvation is felt only by their souls. That means, Kṛṣṇa who is their soul is the person that suffers by their fasting. Are not all of them the bodies of the Supreme Self? Having been born in Nandavraja, and having developed love for Kṛṣṇa, how improper it is for them to take away, like demons, the articles of food most liked by him, namely, milk and butter! No, they would not be guilty of such a crime. Ghee is present in milk; it is inextricably merged in it, so that it cannot be separated from it and shown as ghee. In a similar way, this universe (Jagat) both sentient (Chētana) and insentient (achētana), is the outcome of God's will (Kāryatattwa); and it cannot be separated from Śrīmannārāyaṇa who is the root cause of it (Kāraṇa tattwa). Śrīmannārāyaṇa is the milk. Separated from Him and undergoing a change and taking a different form and a different name, this universe, which is nothing but an enlarged manifestation of His splendour, is the ghee. The gōpikas declare that they do not consume milk and ghee for *their own* pleasure; nor do they entertain the feeling that they are enjoying them. This is what they wish to convey by their intention to fast, to give up milk and ghee.

The gōpikas may also be conveying, by suggestion, that their experience of God, resulting from their chanting of hymns of praise, has already fed them; and that they are so full with it that they are unable to consume any other. Those who remain in the presence of God consider that God-experience itself is their

food to eat, water to drink, raiment to wear, *pan* to chew for diversion (*vilāsa*); and they feel no relish for the worldly feasts and pleasures. Those who have just eaten cannot eat again. Likewise, those who have had a spiritual repast find an ordinary feast to be superfluous. This lack of hunger and inability to indulge in feast is what constitutes fasting. Giving up food under compulsion, even while hungry, is not fasting. It may be starvation.

As Āṇḍāl has completely identified herself in imagination with the *gōpikas*, she does not say, "we do not take food"; on the other hand, she says: "we do not consume ghee, we do not drink milk." Milk and butter are the staple food for the *gōpikas*. Those who live with the firm conviction that Vāsudeva is All-in-all (*Vāsudēva-Sarvam*) find their sustenance in the nectar provided by the song of praise to the name of the lotus-eyed Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Pāthēyam Puṇḍarikākṣa nāma sankīrtanāmṛtam.

Thus the first thing to be done in this ritual is the recital of the hymn of praise; and the first things to be given up, milk and butter.

5. *Nātkālē nirāḍi*

"We bathe at break of day."

"Instead of getting ready to bathe after the arrival of Kṛṣṇa, we bathe before he actually turns up; and thus become fit to be enjoyed by him."

The essential point here is to bathe before the day breaks. Bathing at dawn is an injunction which applies to all. In mentioning this as one of their regulations, they seem to convey a secret meaning. Taking a bath, speaking the truth, discharging a duty—such principles are to be observed regularly and always. But observing them on the days of ritual yields greater fruit; while non-observance imparts a darker blemish (*dōṣa*). So it is obligatory to observe the regulations punctiliously during the days of ritual.

People do wake up early in the morning. True. But the dawn, when the *gōpikas* rise to take their bath, has a special significance. As dawn is the time when the tendency to purity (*sattwagūṇa*) predominates, the mind shines in all its freshness.

Not to waste such time by plunging into worldly pursuits but to use it for immersion in spiritual subjects concerned with God, is the unique significance of their morning bath. The Supreme Lord in His eagerness to protect them has come down to the Sea of Milk and is eagerly waiting for their call. But these devotees are unable to endure even the short interval of time between their summons and His response and so hold out the threat: "Look! We shall take our bath before daybreak." This restlessness is similar to that of the queen who attempts to protect herself because of the little delay occasioned before her husband, the all-powerful King, could respond to her call. Such an audacious move amounts to an insult to the King. The King hastens to her side with speed for fear that the world may ridicule him as one who is unable to succour his wife. The prescriptions that the gōpikas observe in the ritual are not expected to confer on them special benefits; they are observed only to induce Kṛṣṇa to speed up to their midst.

There is something more. They wish to indicate that even those who enjoy God-consciousness and who are devoted to Him and believe in Him as the only means, should not abjure the daily bath and other perpetual obligations, but render them as dedicated acts of service to the Lord.

It is said that to cool his body from the consuming heat generated in it by separation from Rāma, Bharata used to repair to Sarayu river at midnight for a dip. Likewise, under the plea of the ritual, the gōpikas get ready for a bath so as to alleviate the heat of agony resulting from separation from Kṛṣṇa. After the fall of Rāvaṇa, Vibhīṣaṇa entreated Śrī Rāma to have a bath. Rāma declined saying that in the absence of Bharata, the son of Kaikēyi, he had no relish for a bath; and that new clothes and ornaments would appear as needless burdens. God Himself has rejected a bath when His own belongings, His own kith and kin who are, as it were, part of Him (Śeṣa-bhūta) are away from Him. How then can the latter ever accomplish a bath away from their owner and sustainer? When the husband is away, the wife does not feel like taking a bath. In such a case, how is it that the gōpikas, knowing it to be wrong, prepare themselves for a bath? It is only to make known to Kṛṣṇa their acute agony of separation from him and thus melt his heart.

6. *Maiyiffeḷudom*

"We do not decorate our eyes with collyrium."

The eyes of the *gōpikas* are naturally graceful. Still, it is auspicious to decorate them with collyrium. They now declare that they will renounce it during the period of the ritual.

The eye is the symbol of Knowledge. *Jñānayōga* consists in having knowledge of the true self. To acquire that knowledge by themselves and for themselves is considered reprehensible. So the *gōpikas* refuse to acquire and enjoy it; they welcome it only when they come by it through the grace of God. Such is their strong conviction of their entire dependence on God (*Pāra-tantrya-niṣṭha*). While dealing with their principle of daily bath, they have occasion to elucidate *karmayōga*, that they perform works only as dedicated services to the Supreme and not for their own satisfaction. That is the principle of abidance in works (*Karma niṣṭha*). Likewise, they are prepared to accept knowledge of the nature of the Self, only if He vouchsafes it to them for His own pleasure. They will not earn it by themselves or for their own delectation. Such is their abidance in knowledge (*Jñāna niṣṭha*).

If the eye stands for knowledge, the collyrium which decorates the eye stands for devotion. This ointment imparts brightness to the eye; so does devotion to knowledge. This *Anjanam* is earned by enlightened souls (*siddhas*) who have attained God, and is given by them to their beloved friends (*āptaḥ*). With its help can be seen the treasure, hidden somewhere in the depths. Deep in the soil of this body is buried the treasure-trove, the Supreme. Similarly is He transfused in the whole universe. It is essential to smear the eye of knowledge with the collyrium of devotion, in order to become competent to perceive this treasure, God.

As the *gōpikas* are entirely dependent on God, they make no effort of their own even to acquire devotion to Him. The moment the tendency to purity (*Sattva-guṇa*) emerges, they consecrate all their activities to Him and cease all other trials. In stating that they do not decorate their eyes, they imply that all attempts at beautifying the body become futile, until after the soul is properly adorned. When the soul is chastened and filled with His communion, it becomes beautiful; and then only do ornaments to the body make for splendour.

After all, what for is decoration except to delight the Lord? And when He is away, why should they beautify themselves? The gōpikas adorn themselves only to give an opportunity to Kṛṣṇa to rectify the shortcomings in their efforts. When he is by, he notices the lapses and himself corrects them, gives finishing touches to the toilet, and enhances their beauty. Their main purpose is to give him satisfaction in some way or other. Providing him satisfaction by supplying him with anything that he does not have is not possible. He has all that he wishes to have. So the only way of their discharging their primary duty of giving him satisfaction is by providing him an occasion to rectify some lapse in their efforts to make themselves agreeable to him. Now that Kṛṣṇa is away, no such chance exists; and so they refuse to decorate their eyes. In their simplicity, they believe that this threat will disturb Kṛṣṇa and hasten him to meet them and persuade them to adorn their eyes with collyrium. Unless they adorn themselves, he has no joy. Until they do so, he will not have the coveted privilege of making adjustments in the decoration and feeling happy. How long can Kṛṣṇa withhold himself from them? Is he not an adept in the lore of love?

7. *Malarittu nām muḍiyōm*

“We are averse to decorating our hair with flowers.”

Bloom and fragrance emanate only by contact with the Divine. The gōpikas find these qualities in the flowers. Now they have developed resentment of flowers because they have seen in their bloom and sweet scent the touch of Lord Kṛṣṇa, which they themselves are lacking in. Hitherto these flowers used to retain their delicacy (Soukumāryam) and fragrance (Sougandhyam) by clinging to the hair-dos of the gōpikas. That is to say that, even to those who have experienced God, constant association with devotees provides fresh joy for ever and ever. Now the gōpikas are disinclined to strew flowers in their hair. This is one of the regulations they observe as an adjunct to the rite. Usually, participants in religious rituals are prohibited from smearing their eyes with collyrium and decking their hair with flowers.

Flower is a symbol of enjoyment (Bhōgam). Decking the hair with flowers, like smearing the eyes with collyrium, is a means

of making oneself more attractive. This effort at decoration they reject as futile, even because the Lord who is to enjoy that beauty is away. If he were by, he would approach them, choose the flowers and arrange them in their hair and insist, upon oath, that they should retain them there, if only for his delight. No such consummation is possible now. Hence their rejection of flowers. The devotees should not indulge the thought that they are enjoying the pleasure that God-consciousness generates. Rather, it is proper to think that God manipulates that joy for them in order that it may cater to His own delight. If He conditions the soul by providing it with knowledge and devotion to attain spiritual experience and derive joy out of it, let Him please Himself. But the gōpikas do not, of their own accord, initiate efforts to earn knowledge and devotion. That is why they say that they will not by themselves deck their hair with flowers (Nām muḍiyōm). If He does it, out of His own grace, they do not raise any objection. To try to adorn themselves smacks of independence; to object to His doing it likewise signifies independence. It is this spirit of independence that has to be cast aside during this ritual. In suchwise do they show how participants in this ritual should cultivate abidance (Niṣṭha) in the adoption of the three courses of discipline, works (Karma), knowledge (Jñāna) and devotion (Bhakti).

Even those who count upon God as the means to their reaching Him have to perform the prescribed duties in a spirit of dedication, as acts consecrated to His service. Never should they entertain the idea that they are instruments for God-realisation. In their efforts to gather the true knowledge of self, or in their endeavours to secure strong attachment to Him in devotion, the thought should never cross their minds that *they* are doing all this *for their own* happiness. On the other hand, they should consider that God's grace has urged their efforts; and when their efforts bear fruit, they should gratefully accept it as a gift vouchsafed by God for His own pleasure. Even while experiencing God, they should not think that *they* are enjoying Him; they should keep in mind that God has given them the experience for His own pleasure and that it is not up to them to reject it.

8. *seyyādāna seyyōm:*

“We refrain from doing things that are not done by our elders.” Instead of saying that they will not do things that are prohibited by the Śāstras, they declare that they will not do the things rejected by their elders. They have given greater importance to tradition and custom than to the injunctions of Śāstras. Dharma Śāstra declares that the practices of those who know righteousness (Dharma) are to be accepted as authority and also Vēdas (Dharmajña samayaḥ, Pramāṇam Vēdāścha). The way of life of righteous people is the highest authority. In the Upaniṣad where the preceptor prescribes a way of life to the disciple, instruction is given that whenever the disciple is faced with a doubt in the rites he performs or in the way of his conduct, he should follow the ways generally adopted by adepts in rituals (karma niṣṭulu), by righteous men (dhārmikulu), by gentle folks (soumyulu) and by men of austere disposition (śraddhājuvulu).

(*Adha yeditē karma vichikitsavā
vṛtta vichikitsavā syāt
Yē tatra brāhmaṇāḥ sammarśinaḥ,
Yuktāḥ āyuktāḥ alūkṣāḥ
Dharma kāmāssyuh, yathā tē tatra vartēran
tathā tatravartēthaḥ*).

The gōpikas follow in the footsteps of their elders whose practice it has been to worship and serve Kṛṣṇa and none else. They are of the conviction that he is to be attained (sādhyam) and that he is the means (sāadhanam) to effect that attainment. However much they like him, they know that they cannot directly attain him; they must accomplish their wish through their elders only. Hence it is, they rouse one another and assembling, with their elders to the fore, they worship Kṛṣṇa. When gōpikas are of the strong conviction that Kṛṣṇa is both the end and the means, why need they aspire to cultivate spiritual qualities and renounce worldly qualities? It is because they are sentient beings and cannot remain idle that they act in such a way; but they do not regard these qualities as means to the end. As the Supreme Soul is immanent in all objects of creation and has spread Himself over the entire universe, it is improper to regard one as a friend and another as an enemy. Everything is to be conceived as closely associated with God;

and that is why Prahlāda treats all things alike (*sama bhāvana*). The Āḷwārs (Vaiṣṇava saints), too, consider this water and this earth as part of the plenitude (*Vibhūti*) of God and so are as much worthy of welcome (*ādarāṇyam*) as Brahma and Rudra and other deities.

In such a case, why should the *gōpikas* make a distinction between what are to be done and what are to be avoided? Granting that everything in the universe reflects God's glory, we have to dissociate from one who is opposed to God and is conceited enough to think that he himself is God. The reason for this is not that God does not pervade everywhere (*Vyāpti*), but that this particular adjunct (*upādhi*) is wicked; and until it gets chastened, it should be rejected and kept at a distance. Fire is the same everywhere; but fire in the cremation-ground is unacceptable because of the stain of its adjunct. Similarly, persons who believe that their bodies are all-in-all (*ātmābhimānulu*), or actions which promote such attitude, deserve to be rejected. Bharata does not accept the kingdom even though his father has given it to him and people have assented to it and the preceptors have commended its acceptance—all for the reason that in the annals of his family (*varṇa*) it has been the practice for the eldest to rule over the kingdom and not for the younger ones. Again, Vibhīṣaṇa knowing fully well that Śrī Rāma is all-in-all for him and that he is sure to protect all who surrender to him, seeks his favour through Sugrīva and others and not directly. This he does to respect the custom sanctified by time. The *gōpikas*, too, accept the authority of custom in performing their ritual.

9. *tikkuraḷaic cenrōdōm*

“We do not utter words that harm others.”

Words should be truthful and agreeable and should benefit others. Words are true when they bring about good to the living creatures. Even the words that cause good should not produce excitement to the mind (*udvēgam*). The art of speaking properly is a great penance. To extol oneself and to decry others, to expose lapses and ridicule them, to indulge in subtle abuse and indirect heckling—these are the ways in which words are used viciously. Instead of saying that they will avoid these ways and speak only words that bring forth good, the *gōpikas* declare that they will not utter words that harm others. Of the two—speaking good

words and avoiding bad words—the latter is a better penance to undertake. Again, going to people voluntarily and uttering wicked words deliberately against others, makes the sin more vicious. Avoiding slander is considered important in this ritual. Here are the people who have believed in the Lord as the means; and, when under His protection they go and stand before Him, it is essential that they should not speak ill of all those who have so long caused obstacles to them. After Sītadēvi rejoins her husband, she never refers, even in private, to the tribulations she has suffered at the hands of the rākṣasas. The gōpikas who have, while rousing each other, indulged in playful words of condemnation and recrimination refrain from making a submission of them before him. When they come into his presence, they have clean forgotten them. This ritual gets sullied, unless they cultivate strict control of their tongues. Any attempt to hurt others ruins their Vrata; it is obligatory for them to extend pity to those in trouble.

10 *Aiyamum piccaiṇu māṇḍanaiyūṅgaikāṭṭi*

“ We bestow gifts and give alms till the recipients say ‘ enough.’ Still, we feel sorry that we could do nothing for them.”

Whatever a man offers for his own salvation and in keeping with his affluence (Vibhavam) to deserving people at a proper place and at an appropriate time is to be considered a “ gift ” (dānam). Whatever is given out of pity to a suffering man comes under ‘ alms ’ (bichcham). Whatever is given to Brahmachāris and sanyāsins (young scholars and ascetics) to cover their immediate needs is called charity (bhikṣha). Even while satisfying the recipients with gifts, alms and charities, one should not feel egoistic about one’s usefulness to others. On the other hand, one should feel inwardly sorry for one’s inability to do anything at all for them. Cultivating such an attitude is a pre-requisite to the participants in the ritual. Instead of feeling egoistic that he could impart to others as much of God-experience and as much of the glory of devotees as he could earn or learn, he should feel sad that he could not be of any use to others. To expound the splendour of God is like giving a gift; and there is no limit prescribed for it. To expatiate upon the glory of the devotees is like giving charity; it should be limited to the aspiration of the recipient and his

immediate needs. Imparting knowledge relating to the nature, form and attributes of the Supreme Lord is likened to giving a gift. Purveying knowledge of the nature of the individual self is similar to giving charity. It is obligatory for the participants in this ritual to share with others all their spiritual experiences and the benefits they have derived from association with devotees.

11. *Uyyu māṇṇi yugand ēlōrempāvāy*

“Examine the exalting methods enunciated above and be delighted to listen to the regulations prescribed for the ritual.”

“During the period of the ritual, sing to the glory of the feet of the Supreme Person. Do not eat victuals that give sustenance only to the body. Accept only such dishes of food as help purification of the mind and communion with God. Bathe at break of day to cleanse your body; chasten your mind by immersing it in the stream of praise of God’s attributes. Do not get fully engrossed in only adorning your body with ornaments. Secure ornaments for the soul, such as action without desire (*niṣkāma karma*), knowledge (*jñāna*) and devotion (*bhakti*). At the same time, do not feel egoistic that you have earned them. Rather, think that God has gifted them to you for His own pleasure. Avoid actions not done by the elders. While in the presence of the Lord, be engrossed in enjoying Him; never attempt to do harm to those who are opposed to His worship by talking ill of them. Bestow gifts and charities without feeling egoistic. Share with others your own knowledge and experience of the splendour of God and of the profound influence of His devotees; and while doing so, never for a moment feel conceited that you have been helpful to others. Devise ways and means of imparting your spiritual experiences to others; and derive pleasure in thus exercising your mind. Infused with such love, come to participate in the ritual, listen to the injunctions prescribed and honour them in practice.”



PĀŚURAM III

PREFACE

The principles to be observed in the ritual have already been outlined. The injunctions of the scriptures are to be observed; otherwise, no pleasure can be had in this world or in the other world. Kṛṣṇa has observed that in determining what things are to be done and what not, scripture is the final authority. *Tasmāt Śāstram pramāṇamtē kāryākāryā vyavasthitau*. Even those, who put their faith in God as the means, have to observe the rules laid down in the scriptures, without hoping for any results therefrom. The gōpikas are performing the rite ostensibly for rain. But their real purpose is to secure union with Kṛṣṇa. This rite is merely an excuse for it. Bath for them is merely an appendage to the rite. In reality, this bath is for assuaging the agony of separation from Kṛṣṇa. The main objective of the rite is union with Kṛṣṇa; rain is the *subsidiary result* (avāntaraphala). To those who perform sacrifices wishing a place for themselves in heaven, the main objective is, no doubt, heaven; but there are certain unintended subsidiary results, like worldly happiness, longevity, progeny etc. The gōpikas show no eagerness for results, visible or invisible. Still, they declare in this hymn that, by their ritual, those who have permitted them to perform it will also have their wishes fulfilled.

In the Gīta, it is stated that only those who are free from envy satisfy the main qualification required to receive instruction in the Gīta. Similarly, participants in this ritual should qualify for it by being free from envy. That is why they wish others prosperity and progress (abhyudaya). It is not enough that the ritual gives happiness to the participants. It must make the whole world happy. It is ~~not necessary~~ that the participants should entertain such a wish. Even when such a wish is absent, the ritual by its efficacy brings about safety not only to the participants but to the entire world.

" *Yatrāṣṭākṣara samsiddhaḥ mahābhāgō
mahīyatē natatra vyādhi durbhikṣa
taskarāḥ* :

Where a person, who has reached fulfilment (siddhi) in the chanting of this particular incantation, (*aṣṭākṣari mantra*) lives, that place and the entire country will be free from famine, disease, robbery and other such evils." By association with gōpikas who are devotees of Nārāyaṇa, their kith and kin (sambandhīs) and their country are sure to abound in joy and plenty.

*Ōṅgi yulagaḷaṇḍa uttamanpērpāḍi
nāṅgaḷ nambāvaikku ccātti nīrāḍināl
tiṅginṟi nāḍellām tiṅgaḷ mummāripeydu
ōṅgu peruñcennel ūḍu kayalugaḷa
pūṅguvaḷai ppōḍil porivaṇḍu kaṇpaḍuppa
tēṅgādē pukkirundu śirttamulai patti
vāṅgakkuḍam nīraikkum vaḷḷaḷperumpaṣukka!
nīṅgāda śelvaṁ nīrainḍelō rempāvāy*

Summary.

As we chant the sacred name of the Supreme Person, Trivikrama, (who, on receiving the gift from Emperor Bali, grew in stature upto the sky and measured the three worlds with his feet) and take our bath under the plea of the ritual, may the world be refreshed with three good showers a month and be free from all physical ills and feel happy! While the paddy plants shoot up to the sky and fish leap about in the waters of the corn-fields, and the charming bees slumber in lotus flowers, may the land smile with rich harvests! May the cattle sheds abound with cows whose udders, on a mere touch of the steady milkman, release potfuls of milk! May the whole land be filled with prosperity that never wanes nor comes to an end! May the whole land ever flow with milk and honey!

Commentary.

It has been already mentioned that, in this ritual, God is worshipped in all the five aspects of God-phenomenon—as the Para (the Supreme), the Vyūha (the Quiescent), the Vibhava (the Magnificent), the Antaryāmin (the Immanent), and the Archā (the Adorable). In the first hymn, the gōpikas have declared that the Supreme Being, Nārāyaṇa, alone is the Giver of the fruit that they are seeking. In the second hymn, they have referred to Him as the Protector of the world resting on the Sea of Milk and sung praises to His feet (Paraman ādīpāḍi) before undertaking the ritual proper. In this hymn, they praise Trivikrama (Uttaman Pērpāḍi) who, to save Indra, begged Bali for three paces of earth and covered the entire universe with his two feet. The word, ‘Nārāyaṇa,’ suggests completeness in auspicious attributes (Guṇa paripūrti) and All-pervasiveness (Sarva vyāpakatvam). These two aspects are dealt with in the second and third hymns. Again in the word “Nārāyaṇa” are implied other attributes like Omniscience (Sarvajñatvam), Ownership (Swāmitvam), Easy Accessibility (Saulabhyam) and Gracious Considerateness (Vātsalyam). Among these, the principal attribute is the Vātsalya of the great Ordainer (Sarvēśwara) in protecting the universe; and this characteristic is brought out in the words “the Supreme Person resting on the Sea of Milk.” The eagerness of the Lord to protect, not finding full occasion to satisfy itself while resting on the sea of milk, is compared to a flower which is shorn of its glow owing to the dew that has fallen in the night. But in the same way as the impact of the rays of the rising sun makes the flower blossom forth with fresh radiance, the prayer of Indra has revived the Lord’s ardour for protection and as He appears before Bali in the form of a dwarf (Vāmana) He loses himself in joy. This incarnation provides proof of the all-pervasiveness suggested in the word “Nārāyaṇa.”

1. *Ōṅi yulagaḷaṇḍa uttaman pērpāḍi*

“Having sung to the name of the magnanimous Person (Uttama) who grew in stature and measured the worlds, we prepare for the ritual of purificatory immersion.”

Growth and decline do not affect the Supreme Self. But the Changeless One has undergone a change out of His eagerness

to save the world. The gōpikas admire this change as it underlines His graciousness. All objects in Primal Nature pass through six states—to take birth, to be, to grow, to change, to decline and to die. These states do not at all affect the Supreme Self. Yet He who has no birth, takes birth, stays stunted, and then grows—all for our sake. We pass through these states because of our past works (Karma). God undergoes them out of love for us. Growth and decline cause us sorrow. But birth and growth that God permits Himself to undergo for our sake bring us ample good. “The Upaniṣad declares:” That same Supreme Self having taken birth assumes the form only of good. *Sauśrēyān bhavati jāyamānaḥ*” Our birth brings sorrow in its wake; but the birth of the Supreme only purveys good (śrēyaḥ prada). Our birth may yield good sometimes; but sorrow is mixed along with it. But the birth of the Supreme results *only in good*; and it can never be otherwise. From the moment He takes birth does the Supreme cause good to the world. “My birth (Janma) and works (Karma) are divine. (*Janma Karmacha mē divyam*). He who truly knows them leaves his body and attains me; he will not be born again.” Such is the declaration of Lord Kṛṣṇa. To know the secret of His birth makes for our good; and to think of our birth is to involve ourselves in sorrow; and there is no uncertainty about this. The Vēda (Śruti) impresses this upon us by declaring emphatically: “By taking birth the Supreme must necessarily bring forth good.” (*Jāyamānaḥ-saḥ-Śrēyānbhavati-U*)

Those who have fully experienced the joy of God’s incarnations can never afford to lose Him. The gōpikas avail themselves of the easy accessibility of Kṛṣṇa to the full extent; at the same time they are also aware of his divinity. Theirs is no mere infatuation (vyāmōham). The incarnation of Vāmana comes closest to the incarnation of Kṛṣṇa; and what has particularly attracted them in the former incarnation is the growth in stature.

We too grow. But the growth of Vāmana is the growth of One who knows neither growth nor decline. Indra loses his kingdom and weeps bitter tears of grief. Seeing the distress of His devotee, the Supreme Lord feels depressed and shrinks into a dwarf. The moment the sacred water with which Bali makes the gift falls into His hand, the joy that His begging has become

fruitful surges so high that Vāmana's stature fills the entire universe. Look, to what magnanimous limits His gracious considerateness for His devotees takes Him!

Again, begging makes even ordinary people despicable. Dwarfishness is despised by all. Yet the Supreme has agreed to become a manikin and a beggar. Growth and decline when brought about by past actions (Karma) and when used for selfish ends become blemishes (dōṣamulu). But when they are manipulated by the Lord for Himself and out of His pity for His devotees and for the protection of the universe, they cease to be lapses and become merits.

Śrī Bhattar once declared that even God in Paramapada with all His wishes fulfilled and in absolute bliss melts with pity on seeing the sad plight of individual souls which are caught in the coils of the non-self (Samsāra). Some express a doubt as to how God, the Embodiment of Bliss, could ever entertain anxiety in the Heavenly Abode. Śrī Parāśara Bhattar explains that this feeling of distress is no lapse on His part but a merit; and gives an example from the Rāmāyaṇa. After making all preparations for Śrī Rāma's coronation, Daśaratha invites all the people and expresses his wish; then, in one voice, they express their eagerness to have Rāma as King. Daśaratha is pleased but he wishes to know what is at the back of their minds and so wittily enquires: "I have been ruling this land so long in a righteous manner. I wonder why all of you want Rāma to become your king." The people say in reply: "Your son possesses many auspicious qualities and so we want him." (Bahavaḥ nṛpa Kalyāṇaguṇāḥ putrasya santitē). Enumerating the qualities, they emphasise the moving quality of commiseration: 'Śrī Rāma weeps bitterly when any one comes into trouble or danger. (Vyasanēṣu Manuṣyāṇām bhṛṣam bhavati duḥkhitāḥ) It is a defect if one weeps for oneself; but it is a merit when one weeps for others, without drawing any distinction among such persons. In fact, Rāma grieves more bitterly than the person affected. Again, the affected person recovers from grief sooner or later after the occasion passes. But to Rāma, it is an unforgettable sorrow, even because he feels that it is a lapse on his part as king not to have anticipated the danger and taken adequate precautions to avert it. To indicate that the grief

of Rāma abides for all time, Vālmīki uses the verb in the present tense (*bhavati dukhitaḥ*: keeps weeping always). Those who have tasted the Lord's gracious considerateness praise this quality as merit and never regard it as a lapse. Similarly, although the Supreme is an embodiment of knowledge and bliss, He, while enjoying bliss, also weeps with pity for the struggling and sorrowing humanity. Thus weeping is an established merit! It is that Supreme that descends to the Sea of Milk and listens to the cry of agony of the celestials; and moved by pity for them, He takes birth as a dwarf and begs and takes from Bali the world which is His own.

There is a secret underlining this begging. Bali is a munificent benefactor but is afflicted with overweening egotism. It is but right to bestow what is sought. But it is wrong to think that the world is his and that he is giving charity. Bali forgets that he is prompted to bestow gifts by Another whose property this whole world is. The giver, Bali, should get the fruit of his giving; at the same time, he should be shorn of his egotism. But how could this be done! Egotism leaves him, only when he thinks that he, and all that he believes is his, are God's possessions; and that he should surrender them to God. God plans to bring about this consummation. It is Bali's munificence that has turned God into a dwarf. And it is recognised and rewarded when God seeks a favour at his hands. In order to show His love and solicitude for Bali, the Supreme Being allows His cosmic form to shrink into that of a dwarf and reverses His nature of giving into one of receiving. By accepting the gift, He has favoured Bali by releasing him from his egoism (*ahankāra*) and possessiveness (*mamakāra*). Such is the secret of love involved in His mysterious growth from a dwarf.

There is another peculiarity in this begging. Vāmana begs for three paces of earth. However much Bali presses him to ask for more, Vāmana declines saying that it is enough; and that giving him those three paces is as much as giving him everything. The secret underlying the three paces is elucidated by Śrīkṛṣṇa in three lines (*pādamulu*) of a stanza (*ślōka*) in the Gīta (1) *Yatkarōṣi Yadaśnāsi* (2) *Yajjuhōṣi dadāsi yat* (3) *Yat tapasyasi Kauntēya Tatkuruṣva madarpaṇam*.

(1) Offer to me whatever you do and whatever you eat; (2) Consecrate to me whatever you sacrifice in the sacred fire and whatever you gift in charity; (3) Dedicate to me all your austerities and penances. "Pāda" means 'a pace'; and also a part of a stanza (śloka) which consists of four parts. The three paces sought by Vāmana are exactly those which Kṛṣṇa elucidates in the three parts of the above stanza, as those that should be offered to the Supreme. Making Bali the occasion, Vāmana begs all living beings who are filled with overweening egotism. Likewise, Kṛṣṇa makes Arjuna's despondency the occasion for begging all those who, torn with doubts about right and wrong, indulge in reversal of values and consider right as wrong and wrong as right.

Our works in the work-a-day world are the means to secure us worldly pleasures. Works and enjoyments are inseparable, as the latter are the outcome of the former. In the first pāda of the śloka (first line of the stanza) Lord Kṛṣṇa asks Arjuna to give him all that he does and all that he enjoys. While doing things in this world or enjoying sense-pleasures, never for a moment think that you are the doer (Karta) or the enjoyer (Bhokta). Both doing (Kartṛtva) and enjoying things of this world (bhoktṛtva) are to be consecrated to Him; that is what Kṛṣṇa begs of Arjuna in the first line of the stanza. In the second line of the stanza, what Kṛṣṇa begs of Arjuna is to dedicate to him the sacrifices made and the gifts bestowed by him in order to secure pleasures in the other world. Vāmana has with one foot occupied the whole of the earth (Bhūmi) and with the second the whole of the upper regions (Ūrdhvalōka), thus making His own all the worldly pleasures and all the heavenly joys. In the third line of the stanza, Kṛṣṇa desires Arjuna to donate all his arduous ordeals of penance (tapas) to him. Penance is the means to secure salvation. The ascetic should not think that *he* is making the penance and *for his own* salvation. Rather, he should become God's own agent; and then will he be enabled to entertain the idea that God has been getting this done for His own pleasure and purpose. In the first and second instances, man offers to God things that he has deemed his own; in the third instance, however, he offers himself. That is how Vāmana has, with his third pace, taken possession of Emperor Bali. What is left for Bali now is to go down into the nether world (Pātāla) and rule over it. That means, that Bali must become

a servant to God and submit to His glory; and occupying the lowest position among the servants of the servants of God, become sovereign over the empire of submissiveness (Dāsya Sāmrajya).

Lord Kṛṣṇa has thus brought to light the secret of the incarnation of Vāmana. The gōpikas are aware of this; and so they glorify Vāmana at the very outset. The sense of 'I' (Ahamkāra) and the feeling of 'mine' (Mamakāra) are the bonds (Bandhakas) from which we ought to beg Him for release. Instead, God Himself comes to us and begs us to allow Him to release us from these bonds. Releasing us from bonds is what Vāmana has done; that is what Kṛṣṇa has done later. Such is their graciousness and easy accessibility.

The gōpikas launch upon the ritual with the object of securing union with Kṛṣṇa. But at the outset they indulge in praising Vāmana. What could be the underlying motive? The reason is this: The Supreme incarnated as Kṛṣṇa, as the child of Dēvaki and Vasudēva. Long before that, he was born to the same parents as Pṛṣṇigarbha and as Vāmana; the parents were then called respectively Pṛṣṇi and Sutapa and Aditi and Kaśyapa. The gōpikas evidently know this secret and hence they make no distinction between the two, and treat Vāmana and Kṛṣṇa as one.

The Supreme as Vāmana has overcome and occupied the three worlds (Trivikrama) and measured them. He has granted the touch of His feet to all living beings without considering their merits or demerits. In the same way as the all-pervasive Supreme permeates all beings without distinction, the Trivikrama has touched with his feet all things without discrimination. The reason why God permeates all objects is to give them form and name. Without Him, they have no existence at all. If Trivikrama has now touched all objects with His feet, it is only to allay His anxiety about their safety and to reassure Himself that His entire creation is secure. This He has done for His own satisfaction and not for the world's benefit. The created beings have not expressed any desire for His touch. Of His own accord, He has extended His feet and felt every nook and corner. This is exactly the characteristic feature of a loving, solicitous mother. The mother looks at the sleeping child by her side, and although there is no need for it, fondly feels it all the body over and with her natural love hugs it closer to herself; and

then, feeling reassured, goes to sleep. All this she does for her own satisfaction and not for the child's sake. Trivikrama has, likewise, reassured Himself that His whole creation is in tact by feeling with His feet every object in it. The gōpikas think of this and wonder at His gracious solicitude. At the same time, they feel sad that His delicate feet must have become bruised by contact with hard things like rocks and mounds, rough grounds and tree-stumps.

This incarnation of Trivikrama in which the worlds are measured is well-known and finds mention in the Śrutis: “(*Trithā Viṣṇurvichakramē* ”: — “*Trētha nidadhē padam*” — “*Vichakramē prthivīmēṣa ētām.*”

It is learnt that Viṣṇu occupies the worlds in three ways. This is a reference to the incarnation of Trivikrama. “Viṣṇu” means “one who pervades” (*vyāpanaśīla*). While acknowledging that all-pervasiveness is a feature of the Supreme, some believe that the same quality is also possessed by the Celestial Being presiding over the sphere of the sun. Thus they worship Sūrya under the name of Viṣṇu. Sūrya is worshipped as Trivikrama as he too occupies the world with his rays (which are his feet) in three different degrees of intensity in the morning, noon and evening.

The gōpikas sing about the name of the Magnanimous Person (Uttama) who has measured the worlds. This Trivikrama is the Puruṣōttama (Supreme Person) Himself, who is beyond the transient (kṣhara) and the eternal (akṣhara). He excels those involved in the life of non-Self (samsāra) and bound by the chain of birth and death, and also those who have earned their release from it; and hence is he called Puruṣōttama. That Supreme Person has descended into the world as an incarnation and shown how a person should conduct himself in this world to be called a magnanimous or benevolent person (Uttama).

Men are of three kinds: the benevolent, the wicked and those who are neither. He who for self-aggrandisement gives trouble to others comes under the category of the wicked (adharma); he who lives letting others also to live is neither bad nor good (madhyama); he who is prepared to suffer so that others may live is benevolent (Uttama). Vāmana who has allowed his form and

nature to become mean and despicable in order that he may benefit the world is to be regarded as Uttama, the Benevolent Person. The Supreme Person who is known as 'Sat' (Being) before He has created the universe, gets indistinguishably merged in His creation (Jagat), which is called 'Asat' (Non-Being), in order that He may sustain it. This is sheer benevolence. The Supreme who has no form and no name accepts form and name; and thus imposes limitations on Himself in order that the devotees may worship Him with perfect ease and facility. And this is absolute goodness. Though born a Kṣatriya (in a King's family) Kṛṣṇa leaves his community and voluntarily becomes a cowherd—all for the sake of protecting the gōpas and gōpikas. This is goodness *par excellence*. Śrī Rāma takes a vow before the sages of Dandakāraṇya that he will kill the rākṣasas (demons), who are the sworn enemies of all who do penance. Sīta then gently suggests that this concern for the sages and anchorites and the consequent pledge to kill the demons may be unnecessary. Out comes the clamant declaration: "I am prepared to lose my life; to lose you, to lose even Lakṣmaṇa. But I shall never break a vow" (*Apyaham Jivitam Jahyām tvām vā Sītē sa Lakṣmaṇām natu pratijñām*). Śrī Rāma's goodness lies in trying to save others, not minding what happens to himself or to his own dear ones. The gōpikas glorify the name of the Benevolent Trivikrama as they launch their ritual.

The names of God indicate His auspicious attributes. When we chant a name, the attribute indicated by it flashes in the mind and evokes love. And out of this love, the devotee goes on repeating it, even because he cannot refrain from it. Whatever comes out spontaneously from a devotee, who loses himself in love, becomes a song. What we say when we are conscious of our bodies are only so many words.

There is as much difference between God's name and God, as there is between God and others. The name of God is superior to God. Even when God is away at a distance, God's name is close at hand; and it saves the devotee. When Śrīkṛṣṇa is away in Dwāraka, it is the utterance of his name that has saved Draupadi. If God-phenomenon (Bhagavat tattva) is a ring of gold, God's name is an ornament of gold made ready to put around the neck. Even those who declare that there is no God have to utter His

name in order to deny Him. Those who abuse Him have likewise to utter His name in order to abuse Him. Even a person, who raises his hand against his mother, spontaneously utters the word "mother" (Amma) when he is hurt. His dislike of his mother is powerless to prevent him from uttering 'amma' when in pain. For the cure of physical ills, we have to depend on His name. For the removal of mental worries, we have to resort to His name. For the eradication of sins that cling to the soul, we have to turn to His name. For the urge to love God and the aspiration for His union, we have to seek refuge in His name. To glorify His name, no qualification is needed; nor can its outcome be prescribed or determined. A man who wishes to bathe in the river Ganga does not earn eligibility for doing so by previously bathing in another place. The worthy person, as well as the unworthy, alike bathes in the Ganga. Similarly, for chanting the name of God, there is no question of worthiness or unworthiness. Those who abide in ritual (*Karmayōga niṣṭas*) should perform it, uttering the names of Kēśava, Nārāyaṇa etc. The chanting of these names of God will purify them of their sins and give them fitness to perform the rites. If those who cling steadily to the way of knowledge (*jñāna mārga*) are able to gain a better and clearer self-knowledge, it is because of the influence of the chanting of His names. Again, the repeated recital of God's name intensifies love for God in those who tread the path of devotion (*bhakti mārga*). The man who surrenders to God as the All-in-all (*Śaraṇāgati*) seeks refuge in His name throughout his life. Thus, chanting of God's name is a 'must' to all aspirants, whatever way they adopt, Karma, Jñāna, Bhakti or Śaraṇāgati. To the ordinary run of mankind and to atheists and even to those who despise God, God's name seems to be inescapable. The gōpikas therefore lovingly extol that Puruṣōttama's name in the song and commence their rite.

2. *Nāṇḡaḷ nambāvaikkuc cātti nīrāḍināl*

"If we take our bath in the name of this rite (the whole world will enjoy happiness.)"

They glorify themselves and their rite. They praise themselves because they, who cannot live without singing the praises of the Lord, have been given opportunities to sing openly the glories

of Kṛṣṇa in their very village, by the very people who have not tolerated it previously. They have undertaken the rite, not with any ulterior motive, but with Kṛṣṇa for their objective, and with him alone as the means to realise their purpose. Till they attain that realisation, they occupy themselves with this rite, not for their own sake but for the good of the people and the world. When on the plea of this rite they take the bath and become freed of the agony of separation, the whole world becomes happy as a result thereof. It is only for the good of the world that Vāmana has become a bachelor mendicant and taken to begging. The gōpikas declare that their ritual which begins with the singing of His name is sure to bring happiness to the world.

3. *Tiṅginṛi nāḍellām tiṅgaḷ mummāri peydu*

“The land will have three showers of rain every month and it will be free from troublesome pests and other similar evils (*Iti bādhalu*).” As a result of this rite, people will have rich harvests and plenty of milk and milk-products. The land will flow with milk and honey. There are six sources of danger which cause harm to crops; and they are floods, drought, mice, birds, locusts and wicked kings. With the beginning of the rite, not only the village of Nandagōpa but the whole country will become free from the pests. And this is not owing to the efficacy of the rite; it is entirely due to the grace of Kṛṣṇa. The benefits that accrue from relationship with God are not confined to the devotees only; they extend to all those who have the remotest association with the devotees. If our meritorious actions yield fruit, the benefits will naturally be in proportion to our merit and be confined to ourselves. But when the benefits result from the grace of God, they will have no limits. They are not restricted to an individual; nor confined to a country. During the time of Śrī Rāma’s reign, all the people are happy (*hr̥ṣṭam*), contented (*tuṣṭam*) strong (*puṣṭam*) and free from disease (*arōgam*), famine (*durbhikṣam*) and fear (*bhayam*)—not because of the greatness of their individual merits but because of Śrī Rāma’s exceptional and unique excellence (*bhāgyaviśeṣa*). The same conditions prevail now too. The crops will be free from pests; there will be three showers every month, at the rate of one for every nine days of hot sun. The soil will be wet and will be supplying the required moisture to

the plants. It is said that rainfall depends upon the nature and character of Brāhmins, Kings and women. One shower owes its fall to the proper discharge of duties prescribed for Brāhmins; another depends upon the just administration of the ruling King; the third rests upon the immaculate chastity of women. The good of the universe lies in the hands of the Brāhmin; the welfare of the State rests upon the King; the well-being of the family centres in the mistress of the house.

The gōpikas' rite brings about adequate and timely showers for the crops and the elimination of all pests and other similar evils.

4. *Ōṅgu peruñcennel ūḍu kayalugaḷa*

"Fish will be leaping about in the well-grown paddy fields." Luscious and stately growth of the paddy-plants in fields filled with plenty of water augurs a rich harvest. The gōpikas claim that their rite will bring about this desirable consummation. Having become engrossed with the vision of Vāmana, the gōpikas find his sportive pranks (*līlalu*) everywhere. When Vāmana grows in stature till he reaches the sky, Indra and other celestials, besides themselves with joy, skip about in high spirits. Now the crops seem to grow sky-high; and the fish frisk about in the fields filled with water.

5. *Pūnguḷaippōdil porivaṇḍu kaṇpaḍuppa*

"Beautiful bees go to sleep together in the blooming lotus flowers; and waking, fall foul of each other."

As the corn fields are filled with deep waters, lotus-blossoms appear on the surface; bees gather into them and sucking honey get intoxicated; they go to sleep losing themselves in the embrace of their beloved ones. As the flowers fold and the bees are imprisoned, they wake up and fall foul of one another for not being warned of the danger. The tenderness of the lotus-petals, the state of intoxication of the bees sucking honey, the rocking of the stalks of flowers by the skipping of the fish, the swing caused by the movement of the standing crop—all these circumstances combine to induce sound sleep in the bees, similar to that enjoyed by princes in their swinging beds. Thus is symbolised the land's plenty (*Kṣetra samṛddhi*) which is brought forth by the ritual.

6. *Tēṅgādē pukkirundu śirttamulaipattivāṅgakkūḍam niraikkum*

Now the gōpikas speak about the abundance of milk and milk-products. "As the cowherds fearlessly enter the cowsheds and squatting on stools catch the strong teats of the cows and squeeze milk out of them, the cows yield potfuls of milk in quick succession."

The cows in Vrēpalle yield milk in plenty. Only strong and bold men dare to enter the sheds. The floor of the sheds is slushy with the spilt milk and the excreta of the cows; only those who set firm foot without slipping, can go in. Again, only those who can squat steadily for an appreciable time, with the fingers of both their hands engaged all the time in squeezing the lusty teats, will answer the purpose. People who wish to draw the milk rapidly in a short time will find themselves unfit here. Bold, strong and steady men alone can manage to enter the sheds, squat steadily on the stools and handle each teat with fingers of both hands squeezing in quick succession; and then pots after pots are filled with milk to overflowing.

7. *vaḷḷaḷ perumpaṣukkaḷ niṅgādaṣelvaṁ niṛaind ēḷōrempāvāy*

"The country will abound in inexhaustible prosperity and in gracious cattle which generously yield potfuls of milk."

As competent cowherds begin milking the cattle, each squeeze of the teat is followed by a shower of milk which has to be collected in pots. The fault, if any, lies in removing a filled pot and thrusting in an empty one; there is no break in the flow of milk from the udders; and if milk overflows, the lapse is on the part of the supplier of empty pots to replace the filled ones. Such is the instantaneous and ceaseless flow of milk that none who brings in an empty pot goes disappointed. The cattle are lusty and magnanimous; both in size and quality they are markedly great; and by nature they are perfectly mild.

These cows are fed by Kṛṣṇa. They have grown strong not so much by eating fodder as by the endearing touch of Kṛṣṇa's hand and the sweet draught of his flute's melodies. Kṛṣṇa has humbled himself before his mother, the cowherds, the elders and his companions and the gōpikas and seemed to be submissive.

to them all. The cows have contracted this magnanimity (*audārya*) of Kṛṣṇa by their association with him. They are so submissive that even children freely beat them and fasten them to the posts and even dare to suck milk from their udders. Cattle of such noble breed abound in the village.

And as a result of the ritual of the gōpikas, there will be no reduction in them at any time. The abundance of harvest and of milk is not a changing feature, enjoyed today and denied tomorrow, but a perennially lasting one without any depletion whatsoever. Again, it is not limited to their region but extends over the entire world. The aim of their ritual is not merely for securing their own ends but for the happiness of the entire world.

Deeper significance:

The rite that the gōpikas perform is really the conscious and deliberate endeavour of an earnest devotee who is eager for release (salvation) and anxious to attain God and render Him service. The gōpikas know that their rite is not the means to gain their end; they know that the Supreme is Himself the means; and that to reach Him they should approach only through a preceptor. We should therefore reverently remember our preceptors and render them homage before we begin any work (*asmad gurubhyō namaḥ*). The preceptor belongs to the category of the Benevolent (Uttama). Before beginning their *vrata*, the gōpikas praise the name of Vāmana (Uttaman pērpāḍi), recognising that his benevolence lies in growing in stature and measuring worlds with his feet (*Ōṅi ulagu aḷaṇḍa*). Fastened by the chain of birth and death (*samsāra*), we perform our works, even when they are ordained duties, with the idea that we are doing them for *our own* sake. It is this attitude of 'I' and 'mine' that entangles us in birth and death. When we perform works prescribed by Scriptures (*vihitakarmas*) our minds are chastened. Then the grace of the preceptor flows into our minds as they are now fit to receive it. The preceptor, veiling his real nature and form, approaches us as a common person, as a Vāmana (dwarf), and begs us, arrogant as we are about our own righteousness, for three paces to rest his feet. These three paces are the three words of the incantation which consists of eight mystic letters (*aṣṭākṣari mantra*). Thus he begs us to give him an opportunity to impart to us the three spiritual secrets.

According to Vaiṣṇava tradition (Vaiṣṇava Sāṃpradāya) the three spiritual secrets are Tirumantra, Dwayamu and Charama Śloka—the most sacred incantation *Ōm*, the declaration that nothing is mine and everything is His (*Namaḥ*) and the final attainment of the All-pervasive One (*Nārāyaṇa*). The individual, who is ignorant of these secrets, thinks that he is exceptionally strong (*Mahābali*) and that the worlds are *his* and that *he* is ruling over them; and that *he* is in a position to make gifts to others. Though he is filled with overweening egoism, his heart has become ripe with the proper performance of prescribed duties. The preceptor is aware of this; and he approaches him in a humble manner as one who has come to receive rather than to give; and thus leaves his egotism undisturbed. That is how a preceptor is like *Vāmana*.

One who knows the real nature (*swarūpa*) of the Supreme Self and His form (*rūpa*), attributes (*guṇas*) and splendour (*vibhūti*) and who knows that all this sentient and insentient world is permeated with the spirit of the Supreme, and who has experienced God-consciousness—that one, looks like an ignorant man who knows nothing. He appears as though he has come to beg for alms at our hands to sustain his life. But when the disciple understands the three secrets, the nature of the Supreme, the means of reaching Him and the fruit of attaining Him, he sees the preceptor shining before him as the *Trivikrama*, victor of the three worlds. Both he, and all that he has claimed as his, pass now into the possession of the preceptor. He now comes to think that the preceptor is making him an instrument to get things done, and that he is no longer the doer. Then does he submit to him and become his servant. That *Āchārya* who, moved by mercy, undergoes voluntarily a change of his real nature and character and uplifts his disciple can be considered an *Uttama* (a benevolent person). The *gōpikas* reverently sing his name as they enter upon the rite. The participants in this rite must be such as have sought the favour of a preceptor and learnt from him the essential spiritual principles and objectives worthy of pursuit. They must also have had a vision of his cosmic manifestation.

The moment *Bali* agrees to donate three paces of earth, *Vāmana* becomes the *Trivikrama*; the dwarf becomes the conqueror of the three worlds. The moment the disciple agrees to learn the three

spiritual secrets, the preceptor presents his true nature to remove his misgivings. Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa has shown his cosmic form to Arjuna for this purpose. Similar is the case with Ānjanēya when he transforms himself from a miniature monkey into his true stately form, so as to eliminate Sīta's doubts. The participants in the ritual not only feel charmed by the form of the preceptor; they go a step further; their relish of his name is such that they cannot but chant and praise it all the time. Only when a devotee becomes perfect in the worship of the preceptor does he gain fitness to adore God.

We have to understand the significance of the words "we" and "our Vrata" (ritual) in the declaration "when we take the bath for our ritual, the land will flow with milk and honey." The participants in the ritual relinquish the idea of deriving any benefits for themselves; they believe that God Himself is the means of leading them to the goal, which again is Himself. All that they aspire for is to attain Him and render service to Him. They relinquish all other means and all other objectives. The external prosperity in harvest and milk, which the world gets as a result of this ritual, has already been explained in detail. Now follows an elucidation of the plenitude that the inner soul enjoys (ātma samṛddhi).

The Lord sows the seed of the soul in the soil of the body. He hopes and expects that this seed will sprout and grow well, and yield a good harvest that is worthy of being enjoyed by Him. The entire community of souls (Jīvakōṭi) is the most enjoyable food for the Supreme Soul. When we consume delicious things we feel a pleasant satisfaction (priti). With the same relish God enjoys those souls which blossom with knowledge. For the harvest of the soul to be ample, it is essential to obviate six pests. These are: (1) The thought that this body is the self; (2) the idea that I am free and independent; (3) the feeling that I belong to some other than the Supreme; (4) the concept that I can protect myself; (5) the notion that the body's kith and kin are the true relations; (6) the fondness for sense-pleasures. On account of these pests, the self which is the crop (sasya) languishes and dries up.

There are six remedies to get rid of these ills:

(1) Lack of clear understanding of the true nature of self—namely, that the self is entirely dependent upon the Supreme Self and that all the activities that it engages in belong to the Supreme Self—leads to the misconception that the self belongs to the body and that all its activities are for the maintenance of the body. To overcome this, the true nature of self that it is different from the body is to be clearly understood. By contemplating the meaning of 'm' (ॡ) in the praṇavam (mystic symbol) 'Aum,' the idea that the self and the body are identical will disappear.

(2) By constantly reflecting over the meaning of the first letter in *Aum* we learn that 'A' (ॠ) stands for the Supreme Self who is the Cause of the whole universe and its Protector; and then the idea that we are completely independent will vanish.

(3) To get rid of the thought that we belong to some other than God, it is necessary to concentrate attention on the meaning of the second letter 'U' (ॡ) in the mystic symbol *Aum*. Such concentration confirms the concept that we belong to the Supreme.

(4) Constant reflection on the meaning of "Namaḥ" will eliminate the misconception that we can save ourselves. By this discipline, we come to feel that all our activities (*sarva vyāpāramulu*) are neither for us nor for others but for God only; and that we are entirely dependent on Him. With this knowledge, it becomes easy for us to leave to Him the responsibility of protecting us.

(5) To renounce attachment to those bodily kith and kin who appear to be our close relatives, we have to revolve in our minds the meaning of the word "Nārāyaṇa." Then the conviction grows that He is in all things and all things are in Him; and with that, we find in Him all types of relationship.

(6) To become rid of the fickle fondness for sense-pleasures (*chāpalya*) constant reflection on Āya, the *chaturthī vibhakti* following "Nārāyaṇa" should be undertaken. When the meaning of āya is understood, there will be a cessation of sense-cravings; since all works are taken up in a spirit of dedication to Nārāyaṇa, they become His; and the individual ceases to wish for their enjoyment.

By the efficacy of this Tirumantra, this sacre dincantation, the tendency to purity (*sattavaguna*) dominates, suppressing the

other two modes of passion (*rajas*) and inertia (*tamas*); then three kinds of spiritual showers refresh the individual self. They are:

(1) The shower that creates the sense that the self belongs to the Supreme Self and to none else; that He is its possessor (*ananyaḍeṣatvam*).

(2) The shower that promotes the faith that the Supreme alone is the means for self-realisation and no other; that the individual self will find refuge in Him and in no other. (*ananya śaraṇatvam*).

(3) The shower that strengthens the conviction that the enjoyment of the Supreme alone is most delicious and no other; that the individual self finds relish only in being enjoyed by the Lord and by no other. (*ananyabhōgyatvam*). This is known also as the three-fold knowledge of Ākāra. Acquisition of this knowledge lends support to the growth of the self.

The descent of the three showers of rain may also be elucidated in another way:

(1) In the same way as rains falling on the parched earth slowly percolate into the lower layers making them wet, the refreshing showers of discourses made by devotees in praise of God's attributes find their way into the soil of the hearer's heart and moisten it with an orientation towards God.

(2) Pleased with the devoted services of a disciple, the preceptor imparts to him a mystic incantation which, like a shower, soaks the soil of his heart and fills it with the waters of God-experience.

(3) The occasional expositions of the secrets of the Vēdic lore (*trīarthas*) by the preceptor are like showers enabling the crop, the soul (*ātma sasya*), to overcome the heat (*tāpa*) and grow ever fresh.

The individual self grows with experiences of God, and joining the kith and kin enjoys spiritual experiences in their company, and thus strengthens its base in the same way as the plants on crop-field do by mustering lusciously in pellets of soil. Again as a luxuriant crop shoots forth to great heights, experiences with God elevate the souls to reach the sky. That is as much as to say that the individual souls appear to vision God here and now; and this experience exalts them sky-high. This stage is illustrated in the picture of

the crop-field mustering strength at the roots and shooting the stalks sky-high.

Now, there is the picture of the corn-field filled with water and of the fish springing up off and on. Water signifies the Supreme Soul. The Upaniṣad declares that the Supreme be worshipped as Water. (*Tatjalān*). 'Tat' means the Causal Principle (*kāraṇa tattva*). Out of It is born (ja) this world (jagat). In It the jagat is absorbed (la). By It is Jagat sustained (ān).

Water thus suggests the thought of God. The individual who has a knowledge of his true self and of the Supreme Self is filled always with this thought of "Tat Jalān." This abiding thought is the water at the base of his consciousness. Water alone is the means to sustain the life of fish. So it is with the sages that the thought of God is the element that sustains their lives. Reaching this stage and revelling in it is indicated by the frisking about of the fish in the water.

Those individuals who are free from the pests that are inimical to knowledge, who have acquired Ākāratraya jñānam (the threefold knowledge of their belonging to God only, of their taking refuge in Him only, and of their taking relish in enjoying Him only) who, chastened by the company of devotees, render disciplined and devoted service and earn the goodwill of the preceptor and receive from him the mystic incantation, who by constant reflection on its meaning have become perfected in the knowledge of the self and consequently have ever floated on God-experience and drawn sustenance from it—those individuals are like the corn-fields which are filled with water and with crops grown luxuriantly and with rich harvests bending down.

From the waters in the fields emerge lotuses in which the bees nestle. The flowers, indeed, are the lotuses of the sages' hearts; and the bee that lies there in sound sleep is no other than Śrīmannārāyaṇa accompanied by his consort Lakṣmī. The sage whose heart becomes the lotus in which Śrīmannārāyaṇa resides for ever, himself becomes the fully ripe red grain. By characterising the grain as 'red', the idea that knowledge and devotion should not be dry but should be permeated by love (*rāgātmakamulu*) is emphasised. The redness that colours the sage's soul is caused by its attachment to and love of the Supreme Soul. It is appropriate

to compare the individual self to a grain of paddy. In the same way as the grain is covered by husk and also by an inner layer of a thin film, the soul has a double cover of gross body and subtle being. The inner layer falls off when grain is washed in water; the subtle body drops when the soul passes through the river Virajā. Then the soul acquires a pure form, a form worthy to be enjoyed by the Supreme Soul. The gōpikas expect that as a result of their ritual the country will abound in souls perfect in knowledge. And this is what they mean by the plenitude of harvest.

Let us now examine what is meant by the abundance of milk-products in the village of *Vrepalle*. The harvest described till now refers to the sentient individual selves becoming ripe with knowledge and worthy of release from the bondage of birth-and-death. The knowledge that gives them that fitness is considered as milk. This again is a matter which concerns the preceptor and the disciple; and this aspect is elucidated now. The preceptors are the cows; and the disciples are the milkmen. The milkman enters the cowshed with a steady step and squats patiently till the cow's udder becomes filled with milk and then draws the milk through the teats. The disciple should approach his preceptor without entertaining any doubts; he should courageously seek refuge in the preceptor (*Dhīraḥ śaraṇa mupāgataḥ*). He should have a firm determination to go through the disciplines that will be prescribed by the preceptor and wait with a steady mind till he wins his favour. It is said that instruction should be given only to that aspirant who can wait tenaciously for a year to receive it. After the milkman approaches the cow he squats near the udder and thus does obeisance to the cow; and only then does he attempt to draw the milk. So also the disciple should prostrate before the preceptor before receiving the milk of instruction. The moment the preceptor finds worthy disciples, he bestows on them without hesitation knowledge that they are capable of assimilating. It is then for the disciples to approach the master without delay; the master on his side is ever ready to rain knowledge on them.

Let us look at the analogy between the cows and the preceptors. The cows are fed by Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa; and they have fattened by his touch and by the melody of his flute. The Āchāryas too have received knowledge by God's grace. God-consciousness and

constant repetition of God's name are their sustenance as they grow and ripen in self-knowledge. The cows are stately in appearance; the preceptors achieve similarity to Brahma in their stature. The cows rain milk through their four teats. The preceptors bestow knowledge on their disciples for four reasons. (1) The preceptors are ordained by God to bring salvation to individual selves; and they must carry out His orders. (2) They will have to answer the prayers of disciples seeking instruction. (3) Unable to endure the sad plight of the disciples, they themselves take the initiative to help them. (4) Whatsoever be the nature of the disciples, whether they have the thirst for knowledge or not, whether they seek it or not, the preceptors find it impossible to contain themselves. Instruction flows out of them, asked or unasked. It is in their nature to shower knowledge, And the disciples that gather before them, whatever be their number, get filled with knowledge, each according to his own capacity. The lapse if any is in disciples not gathering in adequate numbers before them to receive instruction; but never on the part of the preceptors.

Like the cows in Vrepalle, the preceptors are magnanimous. Though they give to others, they consider the recipients as their benefactors. Receiving knowledge from them, they consider, is a favour done to them. Even boys and ignorant people find easy access to them. It appears that they are submissive to their disciples. As a result of the gōpikas' ritual, the land abounds in such preceptorial exuberance (āchārya sampada).

The plenitude of the harvest and of the milk-yield described above knows no abatement; and it will fill the land without intercession, as it is all consecrated to God and for His service. Outwardly, the ritual causes plenty in harvests and growth in the number of cows. Inwardly, it works out perfection in self-knowledge (ātma jñāna paripūrṭi) and brings forth innumerable preceptors (āchārya samṛddhi).



PĀŚURAM IV

PREFACE

The gōpikas wish that, as a result of their rite, the world will smile with abundance of harvest and of milk. As bath is essential for their rite, they wish that there will be plenty of water to facilitate bath. Believing in Kṛṣṇa both as the means and as the goal of their pursuit, they refrain from seeking favour from any other quarter. Before devotees who have sought the favour of the Supreme with such undistracted ardour, even the celestials conduct themselves, as they would before God, with humility and subservience and be ready to obey their orders. The Upaniṣad declares that celestials like the Sun (Sūrya), the Wind (Vāyu) and the Cloud (Parjanya) are moved by fear of God and carry out the duties assigned to them. (“*Bhīṣasmāt vātaḥ pavatē bhīṣō-dēti Sūryaḥ.*”) With a similar fear they behave in the presence of the devotees who sing the Lord’s praises:

“*Dravanti daityāḥ praṇamanti dēvatāḥ
naśyanti rakṣāmsi apayānti chārayaḥ
yatkṛtanāt.*”

The efficacy of the devotional exercise of singing the praises of the Supreme is expounded in *Viṣṇudharma* thus: “The wicked demons dare not appear before the devotees who chant hymns; the celestials bow before them; the Rākṣasas perish and the enemies fall off.”

The gōpikas begin their ritual glorifying the name of the Beneficent Vāmana. In response to their wish, Parjanya, the celestial presiding over rain, appears before them, ready to fulfil their desire. The gōpikas command him, prescribing how he should shower rain. The orders of the devotees elicit more prompt attention from the celestials than even God’s commands.

The three hymns—the previous one and this one and the next—appear as true reflections (*Pratirūpamulu*) of the three different incantations in *Sandhyāvandana*, chanted at dawn, noon and dusk,

while making obeisance to the Sun. The prayer at dawn is addressed to Mitra, seeking plenty of milk and ghee for use in sacrificial rites. In a similar way, the gōpikas have praised the beneficent Mitra, Trivikrama, in the previous hymn and craved for the favour of a good harvest and plenty of milk. At noon, the prayer invokes Sūrya, the eye of the world and its administrator (nirvāhaka), and seeks his favour in showering all auspicious and happy things. In this hymn, the gōpikas make a similar request to Parjanya (Cloud). The prayer at dusk is to Varuṇa for purification from all sins. The gōpikas declare in the next hymn that they will get rid of their sins by glorifying Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa.

Before undertaking any special rite, even a supplicant who surrenders himself entirely to God (prapanna), must perform the prescribed duties, like the usual daily sandhyāvandana etc., in a spirit of dedication to God. The sandhyāvandana, the daily offering of prayers at dawn, noon and dusk, is couched in the form of incantations. But this form of incantation, according to general view, is not meant for use by women. To obviate violence to this view, the gōpikas distil the meaning of these mantras in these three hymns and meditate on it for the purification of their minds; and thus perform their daily duties in a spirit of dedication.

In the previous hymn, they have craved for God's plenty and for the plenitude of God's devotees. In this, they implore that great devotees equipped with scholarship and enriched with love of God should, after drinking deep at the fountain of God's grace, assume the role of preceptors; and having attained identity in form with God, shine resplendent with all their intimate God-consciousness and fill the world with the clamant roar of God's name and with the refreshing showers of God's mercy.

*Āḷi maḷaikkaṇṇā onṟu ni kaikaraveḷ
 āḷi yuḷpukku mugandu kōḍārtteṟi
 ūḷi mudalvanuruvam pōḷ meykaruttu
 pāḷi yandōḷuḍaip parpanāban kaiyil*
 5

*āḷi pōlminni valamburi pōl ninṛadirndu
 tāḷāde śārṅgamudaitta śaramaḷaipōl
 vāḷa vulaginil peyidiṭṭāy nāṅgaḷum
 mārgaḷi nirāda magiḷndelōrempāvāy*

Summary.

Oh Parjanya, the majestic Celestial presiding over rain! Do not allow any shrinking in the liberality you usually show in giving. Go deep into the middle of the majestic ocean, drink all its waters to the full, rise with a roar and spread yourself on the sky, with your dark form resembling the divine image of Śrīmannārāyaṇa, who is the Cause of the whole universe. Flash forth in a lightning, like the disc held in the handsome right hand of the lotus-navelled broad-shouldered Lord; startle the world with thunder, resembling that which emanates from the conch in His left hand; shoot forth showers, like the arrows that rain from His bow (*Śārṅga*), in such abundance and continuity that the whole world feels refreshed; and that we feel happy to have our bath in *Mārgaśīrṣa*.

Commentary.

1. *Āḷi maḷaik kaṇṇā onṛu nikaikaravēl:*

At the outset, the *gōpikas* address Parjanya, the celestial presiding over rain. 'Āḷi' means 'ocean'. From this we gather that Parjanya has, like the sea, both vastness and majesty. In the same way as Fire is invested with authority over burning and Wind over movement; Cloud (Parjanya) is appointed to preside over rain. The *gōpikas* indicate here that the Cloud possesses the qualities required for discharging his duties. Only those who are large-hearted and whose affluence is inexhaustible can bestow gifts on others. And vastness and inexhaustibility are the characteristics of Parjanya.

'Āḷi' means also 'a circle.' 'Āḷimaḷai' is 'rain in the form of circle.' Rain falls in the form of circles when it compasses all sides at the same time; and such rain gives complete contentment. Parjanya's executive competence in giving them such rain is praised

in their address to him. Majesty of inexhaustibility, vastness of liberality, and infinite capacity for yielding complete contentment are the three qualities associated with a munificent patron. And the address to Parjanya is so couched as to suggest these qualities in him.

While the Supreme Lord has assigned the duty of killing to Yama and of burning to Agni, He has invested Parjanya with the authority of bringing relief to those suffering from the agonies of heat. This assignment itself reveals what worth he has. Again 'Kaṇṇā' which means 'Nirvāhaka' (an administrator) also means 'Kṛṣṇa'; and the gōpikas are in the habit of constantly calling him Kaṇṇā. That is why the gōpikas do not give up the name of their Lord even while addressing the Celestial presiding over rain as "Āḷi maḷaikkaṇṇā."

This address embraces in its scope all the preceptors who bring about showers of God's mercy. Like the sea, the preceptors should be majestic and large-hearted. They should be able to make God's mercy flow everywhere, not confined to one place but spread over all places, thus giving complete contentment to all and sundry. Unless the aspirants secure this benefit from preceptors, they will fail of the purpose of their ritual, namely, to have the immersion in the stream of experience of God's attributes.

Again, it may here be noticed that there are several points of resemblance between the preceptor and the cloud. While addressing the Cloud, the gōpikas make it clear that if he is made the master of rain, it is only because he possesses large-heartedness. So they pray to him that he should not stint even a bit. Should he, however, exhibit any deficiency in magnanimity, they caution him that he faces the risk of losing his position.

The preceptors possess greater large-heartedness than even God. They make no distinction between the good and the bad; and with a temper that looks on all alike (*samabhāva*) they help to spread everywhere the attributes of God. The Supreme Lord decides awards on an assessment of total performance, taking together the good and the bad works done by the people. But the preceptor, on the other hand, does not care to reckon the

relative good and the bad in them; he considers only the intensity of the agony behind the quest, and showers his grace accordingly. The gōpikas exhort the Cloud to carry out his preceptorial duties and thus avoid shrinkage in his munificence.

The cloud drinks the salt waters of the sea, but yields sweet waters to the world. The Āchārya draws the essentials from Vēdas which are hardly intelligible and hard to understand, and which form, as it were, the ocean of revealed scriptures; and assimilating their full import, he renders them easy and imparts them with such sweet facility that all can enjoy them with relish. “*Śrutisāgara*” means that the Vēdas themselves are an ocean. The terrible and the beautiful alike find place in that ocean. A diver must avoid falling prey to the wild and vicious creatures of the sea; he must have the capacity to go down to the lowest depths in search of pearls and the skill to pick them from the oozing sea-bed. In a similar way, the preceptor should leave out the lifeless and the insipid subjects floating on the surface of scriptures and go to the depths in search of the most essential subject of the Supreme Being and apprehend it. Having understood the nature of the Supreme, he must be able to impart his knowledge to others. Ever immersed in God-experience, he must be capable of coming out of it and helping others to a similar experience.

“*Śrutisāgara*” also means Viṣṇu. It is one of the thousand names by which Viṣṇu is known: “*Viviktaśrutisāgaraḥ*.” All the Śrutis or Vēdas propound the same Viṣṇu and hence become absorbed in Him. “*Vēdaiścha sarvaiḥ ahamēva vēdyah*: I am the One that is to be known from all the Vēdas.” From this, it is clear that all the Vēdas find synthesis in the Supreme Self. Hence it is that He is the “*Śruti Sāgara*.” The preceptor is comparable to Parjanya in as much as he immerses himself in the sea of sacred scriptures and, coming out, rains the benediction of his experience on others.

The Cloud wanders over the country and rains without distinction over desert tracts and arable lands. On the plea of pilgrimage, the preceptors roam about the country disseminating knowledge of God everywhere. The cloud fills only the low-lying lands with the waters it rains. In a similar way, the preceptors fill with God’s grace the lowliest and the lost, showing special

commiseration to them. The cloud does not rain always. The preceptor, too, imparts instruction and good counsel now and then. Disease and pestilence stalk the land if the cloud never rains. If the preceptor does not at all hold discourses, spiritual diseases, like identifying soul with body, flourish in the land. The cloud does not expect any return when it rains; moreover, it does not feel contentment even when it empties itself of all its possessions. The preceptors too wish to impart to others all the knowledge they possess without expecting any return. The rain that the cloud showers takes different shapes according to the places where it falls. The rain that falls in the sea becomes saltish; the rain that falls in the fresh waters of the rivers becomes sweet; the shower that falls on a heated pan evaporates into vapour; the drops that find entry into oysters become pearls; while those that perch on the lotus-leaves sparkle like pearls. In a similar way, the discourse of a preceptor assumes diverse forms according to the assimilating capacity of the disciples and yields different results. Though rain is useful to all, it does not help a certain plant—*Calotropis Indica* (Jilleḍu)—as a matter of fact, it harms it; it denudes the plant of its leaves. Likewise, the religious discourses of great men are meant to bring salvation to all; but they tend to generate a sharp reaction among atheists who drift farther away from God. The cloud showers rain on mountains; and, assuming the form of rivers, it makes itself beneficial to the world even during times when it does not exist. In a similar way, by imparting spiritual knowledge to competent sages, the preceptors see to it that their message flourishes in the world and is perpetuated even after them, thus illuminating succeeding generations. It is because of so many points of similarity between the Cloud and the Preceptor that the gōpikas justifiably include the latter, by implication, in their address to Parjanya ("O majestic Celestial, presiding over rain!") and in their request to him not to stint his natural generosity in giving. The Cloud empties itself of all its contents and turns pale with regret that it has not been able to do anything at all! Even after imparting all the knowledge they have, the Preceptors feel a similar discontent and regret.

The preceptors owe their large-heartedness to their constant clinging to God. Bhagavān calls those that seek and receive His favours as magnanimous people. It is usual in the world to call

those who give benefactions as magnanimous. But Lord Kṛṣṇa declares in the Bhagavad Gīta that those who beg favours and receive them from him are the truly large-hearted people. “*Udārāḥ sarva ēvaitē jñānītvātmaiva mē matam*: Those who approach me seeking gift of knowledge or of prosperity, and those who come to me to attain me, are verily large-hearted. Though they have strength to fulfil their aspirations by their own efforts, they have chosen to relinquish both their strength and effort and approach me seeking fulfilment at my hands. That is where their large-heartedness and my exceptional fortune lie.” And this tradition has spread all over our land; and even now the donor prostrates before the donee and feels happy and fortunate that the latter has accepted his offer.

The gōpikas remind the Cloud and the Preceptor, by implication, not to constrain their natural and traditional generosity. On hearing this, Parjanya agrees to act according to their bidding and seeks leave to go. But they ask him to stay on and listen to the manner in which he has to shower the rain. It is not mere rain that they want, but rain that comes as a result of a prescribed procedure.

2. *Āṭi yuḥpukku*

‘Plunge in the mid-sea.’

While sucking in water, the cloud is forbidden to touch the waters in pools, ponds, tanks and rivers. The cloud should not attempt to draw the waters on the surface or near the shore of the sea. The cloud should plunge straight into the bottomless mid-sea and suck the waters in. Let us see how these features fit in with the preceptor. The Vēdas and the Supreme Being (Viṣṇu) propounded by them constitute the Śrutiśāgara, as already explained. Of all standards, Vēdas are the most authoritative; and again, of all the objectives enunciated by them Viṣṇu ranks as the most Supreme end (*paramārtha*). The preceptor should cling to the Vēdas and regard them, and no other, as the authoritative scriptures, leading to the knowledge of the true nature of God. The Vēdas present several celestials as adorable; but the preceptor should know that none of them is the Supreme Being and that the latter is immanent in them all. Knowing this Immanent Being

as the real benefactor, the preceptor should cling to Him only; and this is what is meant by taking a plunge in the mid-sea. The eternal attributes of God themselves are an ocean. Only those who plunge into that nectarine ocean of God's attributes and experience that bliss to the fullest extent are the competent preceptors.

'Āḷi' means 'God'; and 'yul' means 'into'; "Entering into God." By this, it is clear that the reference is to the preceptors who are adepts in Daharavidya, the worship of the Supreme embedded in the lotus of the human heart: "*Tasmin yadantaḥ tadupāsi tavyam.*" In this type of worship, the Supreme that lies immanent in the lotus of the individual heart and His attributes are to be adored. Plunging into the mid-sea thus connotes enjoying the Lord who is replete with all His auspicious attributes.

3. *Mugandu Kōḍu*

"Taking a deep draught of the waters of the sea."

The cloud is exhorted to plunge into the navel of the sea and to take a deep draught of the waters till the sandy bottom lies bare. Only then will he be full and in a position to bestow plentiful rain. Similarly, the preceptors should be those who, entering the sea of God's attributes, have filled themselves with a deep draught of their nectar; and then only will they be in a position to rain by themselves the mercy of God on the world. It is common experience that water overflows only when the pot is filled and there is no space vacant within it. So also does God-experience overflow, when the heart of the preceptor is filled and there is no room within it to contain it. It is this overflowing stream of spiritual experience that effects the salvation of the disciples. Where the preceptor himself is not completely filled with God-experience, it is idle for him to attempt to impart it to his disciples; for such an effort is bound to leave them cold.

God's attributes may be classified as: (1) Those attributes which persuade us that God is easy of access and facilitate our approach to Him (*āṣṛayaṇa saukaryāpādaka guṇamulu*) (2) Those attributes which prompt us that God is capable of fulfilling the wishes of the solicitors who cling to Him and thus create implicit

trust in Him (*āśrita Kāryāpādaka guṇamulu*). Only that person has grasped both the supremacy and the accessibility of God before whom these two different kinds of His attributes shine forth in their full splendour. He alone has God-experience in its fulness. To have experience of God's supremacy alone, is to have incomplete experience; and this frightens him and drives him away from God, when he sees how infinite God's knowledge and power are. To have experience of God's accessibility alone, is to have, again, partial experience; and when he sees how easily accessible God is, he develops disrespect for God, which equally effectively keeps him away from Him. Only he who has experienced both the supremacy and the accessibility of God has a completeness of experience which makes him inseparable from God.

4. *Arttēṇi*

“Roar and scale the sky.”

“Oh cloud! After drinking the waters of the sea to the full, roar once.” The emanation of roar indicates that the cloud has taken its fill. It is like the belch that comes after a full meal. Thereafter, the cloud is to ascend the sky gradually for it is essential to reach the meridian in order to shower rain. The ascent of the clouds, heavy with water-vapour, is similar to the ascent of pregnant women over a flight of steps, the slow pacing signifying their fulness. In a similar way, when their hearts are filled to overflowing with spiritual experiences, the preceptors give expression to their feeling of contentment and happiness in a deep-drawn sound resembling the roar of a cloud. This ebullition of a vague sound signifying bliss is usually associated with people who lose themselves in concentrated meditation. Having attained God-experience to overflowing and rejoicing in its plenitude, the preceptor slowly ascends the preceptorial seat in the same way as the cloud ascends the heights of the sky. As the water-laden cloud climbs the sky, only to shower rain on the earth, the God-filled preceptor mounts the pulpit, not out of vanity but only to impart his spiritual experiences to others. ‘Ākāśa’ (sky) means ‘that which shines everywhere’; and therefore it represents the Supreme Phenomenon who is self-effulgent (*Swataḥ prakāśam*), ever-resplendent (*Sarvataḥ prakāśam*) and all-pervasive (*sarva vyāpakam*). Only that pre-

ceptor who can mount this sky deserves to be sought after. He is both Śrōtriya and Brahmaniṣṭha. He is Śrōtriya (sage) who knows by constant churning of the ocean of Vēdic scriptures the true nature and form, attributes and glorious manifestations of the Supreme Self. The saint who ever abides in the Supreme by constant contemplation is a Brahmaniṣṭha. The preceptor, who is both Śrōtriya (sage) and Brahmaniṣṭha (saint) can alone be like the cloud that fills itself with the waters of the sea and rises to the sky.

The gōpikas detail how the cloud should look, after it rises to the sky to shower rain: "O Cloud! assume the shape that resembles the form of the Cause of Time and of all other things in the world."

5. *ūḷi mudalvan uruvampōl mey karuttu*

"Make your body as dark as the form of the Supreme Phenomenon (Brahma tattva) that has brought Time into existence."

The Upaniṣad declares that he who knows Brahma attains the form of Brahma (Brahmavēda Brahmaiva bhavati). The preceptor who knows the nature of God and who always abides in God-experience takes the form of God Himself. The cloud that drinks water to its full capacity becomes dark and cool. That coolness is on a par with God's considerateness which is exalted with His mercy. That coolness is identical with darkness. Darkness is a symbol for endlessness (anantatva) and profundity (*agāḍhatva*). As the sky is endless, it looks dark. Dark glasses keep the eyes cool. These qualities are associated with the Causal Principle of creation. At the time of Praḷaya (the Great Deluge) individual selves become so closely intermingled that they are indistinguishable from a dead mass. The merciful Providence separates the individual selves; and with a view to giving them release from bondage, provides suitable bodies to them. That is creation; and the first created object is Time. The Lord who is the cause of Time has a dark form; that is a form which is endless, profound, and merciful. In the same way, the preceptor is not confined by limitations; he is profound in knowledge; and he is replete with kindness. Only such sages as have acquired identity with God are fit to be preceptors.

This dark cloud, on reaching the sky, should flash forth like the disc in the hand of Viṣṇu.

6. *pāḷi yandoḷuḍaip paṇṇāban kaiyil āḷipōl minni*

The cloud should flash forth like the disc in the hand of Padmanābha, the lotus-navelled Lord with broad and handsome shoulders; and then should shower rain. The cloud that rises into the sky is pitch-dark; and before it showers rain, it flashes. That lightning should be similar to the flash of the disc in the hand of Padmanābha. The shoulders of the Supreme Being are broad and beautiful. “*Bāhucchāyā mavaṣṭabdhō yasyaukō mahātmanah.*” The whole universe finds refuge in the shade of those shoulders. Those shoulders are competent to bear the burden of the entire world and give it secure protection. They are put to use to eliminate our enemies and to give us succour; to extend help in pulling us out of the sea of death and of bondage to non-self; and to give us a warm embrace and to render comfort and solace. It is not merely their strength but their beauty that casts a spell on us. The hand that has broken Śiva’s bow and taken Sīta in wedlock is the most handsome; it is the same as the hand of the All-knowing, All-powerful, All-ordaining Being that has existed before the creation. The moment we look at those shoulders, it becomes clear that they possess the requisite power and skill to mould and give form to the universe. In spite of possessing all this power, Padmanābha makes no use of His shoulders except to rest His head on them. From out of the Lotus emerging at His navel, Śrīmannārāyaṇa has, by His volition, created the four-faced Brahma; and, leaving the creating process to him, lain Himself down with apparent unconcern. The Supreme Being Himself is the lotus-navelled Lord. The moment Brahma emerges from the Lotus-navel, the Disc in Nārāyaṇa’s hand flashes forth in an ebullition of joy that the Lord has progeny. The cloud should have a similar lightning flash. The disc is called ‘Sudarśana, auspicious sight.’ When the cloud spreads over the entire sky, the prevailing darkness prevents us from having any idea as to what things exist and where. The lightning discloses them by its flash. Likewise, when Śrīmannārāyaṇa pervades over the entire creation and the showers of His mercy are ready to descend on all, it is the flash of His disc (Sudarśana) that dispels darkness and reveals His

form clearly, thus filling us with inexpressible joy. The gōpikas wish that Parjanya should flash forth like Sudarṣana.

Like the cloud, the preceptor too must flash forth his light. The preceptor who not merely knows God but practises His presence will, by his own effulgence, enable us to see God's own form. He combines in himself the power of knowledge (Jñānaśakti) and the skill in performing works (Kriyāśakti). He has broad and handsome shoulders. He can provide succour to all and protect them. His shoulders are handsome, even because they bear the symbols of the Supreme and are dedicated to His service. Though possessing such power, the preceptor appears inert, doing nothing—all because he is fully engrossed in spiritual experience. Like Padmanābha he lies still; but like the disc in His hand the preceptor flashes light. Out of intense love for the Lord, the disc never leaves His side; and in its anxiety for His safety it revolves rapidly emitting flashes to ward off dangers. In a similar way, the preceptor in his solicitude for God's safety pronounces benediction on Him; and by the perennial radiance derived from constant God-experience he eliminates enemies and projects before the people the vision of the Lord. Lightning is a precursor to rain. The preceptor's radiating light precedes the shower of spiritual experience for the benefit of those who thirst for it.

The gōpikas further desire that the cloud should not only flash forth like Viṣṇu's disc but also thunder its roar like the booming of the conch that is held in His hand.

7. "Valamburi pōl ninṇadīrndu"

"Be steady and thunder like the Conch (Dakṣaṇāvarta Śankham: a Conch with clock-wise circlets)." Lightning and thunder are naturally associated with the cloud. But the gōpikas express their wish that the cloud should shine like the disc in Śrīmannārāyaṇa's hand and roar like His conch. We may desire all worldly objects; but when we enjoy them we have to associate them with God and think of their similarities with Him. When the gōpikas desire that the cloud should assume a form similar to Śrīmannārāyaṇa's, that its lightning should be like the flash of His disc, it is evident that they wish to find the vision of the Lord everywhere. The conch has for its sustenance the breath

that comes out of the mouth of Lord Viṣṇu; its nature is never to leave the lips of the Lord. The gōpikas love the conch dearly, even because they have ever entertained the wish to have its good fortune. The disc leaves the hand of God now and then when commissioned to kill the enemies, and resumes its position after discharging its duties. But the conch never leaves hold of God's hand. It sounds deep only when filled with the breath that flows from God's mouth. This reverberating boom itself has the strength to destroy the enemies. The preceptor who, like the conch, is ever dependent on God and who always feels His presence, booms with his deep chanting of praṇava or reciting of Vēdas which constitute the very breath of the Lord. The Conch is the Praṇava or Ōm, the Name which symbolises God. It never leaves God's side. When we happen to hear this thunder of Praṇava from the cloud, that is the preceptor, then comes the time for the refreshing showers of discourses on God's attributes and for God's mercy to descend on us and drench us. The gōpikas thus express their eagerness to hear the preceptors chanting Praṇava in their stentorian voices.

Later, they request the Cloud to shower rain without break, in the same way as Śrīmannārāyaṇa's bow (Śārṅga) rains arrows.

8. *tāḷāḍē śārṅgamudaitta śaramaḷai pōl vāḷa vulaginil peydiḍāy*

“In the same way as Viṣṇu's bow (Śārṅga) rains arrows, do you pour forth rain without intermission so that the people of the world may rejoice.”

The cloud should mount the sky, spread itself all over with its dark hue, flash like the disc and roar like the conch, and discharge rain without break like the unending arrows leaving Nārāyaṇa's bow. Once the bow is stringed and the first arrow leaves it, the bow takes no respite but goes on discharging arrows at the enemy without intermission till the enemy is destroyed. The cloud should do likewise; it should rain without break till the world is rid of all the pests. And this it should do, not as an answer to the prayers of the suffering people; but out of its own nobility, which is unable to bear the sight of their sad plight. It is not in tune with its magnanimity if it were to rain merely to satisfy the gōpikas. While the shower of arrows emanating from Rāma's bow cause destruction

to some and happiness to others, the showers that the cloud bestows should result in universal rejoicing.

Let us look at its application to the āchāryas. The rain stands for the experience of the auspicious attributes of God and of the nectar of God's mercy that the preceptors ceaselessly purvey to the world with unremitting zeal. Again, the bow, like the conch, indicates Praṇavam or Ōmkāra. The Āchārya begins imparting the incantation of Ōm to the disciple, as a Śabda (word); and the latter learns it as such. It is only later that he explains to the disciple all that it implies and signifies. This explanatory exhortation as to the nature of God and of the nature of the individual self and of their intimate and inseparable relationship descends like rain on the disciple. The individual self then realises that he is the body of the Supreme Self and thus belongs to Him for ever, and that his relationship with God is eternal. While making the exhortation detailing the shades of meaning of Ōmkāra, the preceptors do not think they are doing all this to confer a benefit on their disciples. On the other hand, they think that they do so to benefit themselves.

The cow cannot resist the flow of milk, once its teats are full. In the same way, when the hearts of the preceptors melt with considerate love for their disciples, they cannot withhold showering on them the nectar of their experience of God and His attributes. Maybe, rain does not yield happiness to all in the world. But the spiritual discourses of the preceptors provide happiness to all aspiring souls. The gōpikas pray for such refreshing showers both from the cloud and from the preceptor. The principal aim of the rite is to secure rain for general good; and when that is fulfilled, the gōpikas derive happiness from seeing all the world happy.

9. *Nāṅgaḷum mārgaḷi nīrāḍa magiṇḍēḷōrempāvāy*

“May your rain refresh us also and prompt us to a full plunge in this Mārgaśīrṣa bath.” When the clouds shower rain, the people are freed from drought and they are happy. The gōpikas rejoice in the happiness of the people. They consider it more important that the elders, who have given them leave for the rite, should first enjoy the fruits of their endeavour. Their own turn to feel happy should come only later. Envy makes one unable to endure

another's happiness. What they expect to achieve by this rite is freedom from envy. That is why they delight in seeing others happy.

Moreover, they find exultation in the thought that they join one another as co-participants and that they enjoy this blissful experience together. It is congregational rejoicing in an experience commonly shared. As has been already stated, the ritual bath is only an ostensible excuse. The main purpose is to attain the bliss of union with Kṛṣṇa; and this is to be attained not in isolation, each by herself, but in company, all joining together. And this highest bliss they can get, only through the grace of a Preceptor. Outwardly, they conjure Parjanya to shower rain in such manner that the elders, who have sponsored this ritual, may rejoice and the gōpikas who have participated in it may delight in their elders' happiness. Inwardly, they pray that the preceptors may shower their grace on them and bring about their union with the Lord.



PĀŚURAM V

PREFACE

In response to the call of Āṇḍāl-gōpika all the gōpikas assemble at an agreed place. Among them are scholars well-versed in various branches of studies—Śāstras, epics, ethical and philosophical works, spiritual and religious lore and literary master-pieces. Some of them feel that they are without wisdom; and that they have committed sins knowingly or unwittingly during the present birth; and that there is a huge pile of sins committed in previous births. They therefore feel uncertain of their attaining Kṛṣṇa, while this pile of sins remains unliquidated.

This doubt is strengthened by a gōpika who has studied the Śāstras. She observes that great sages and Ṛṣis have failed to realise their goal, despite their disciplined conduct and severe austerities, because of the obstructing influence of the works accumulated in previous births (*Prāchīna karma prabhāva*). That is why the aphorism “*Śrēyāmsi bahu vighnāni*” has acquired currency. (Good action meets with many obstacles and failures). Therefore, she suggests that they may first purify themselves of their sins before launching upon this particular rite for attaining Kṛṣṇa.

Another gōpika, who is learned in epics, seeks to confirm the doubt. She refers to the story of Śrī Rāma's coronation. Daśaratha, who has overcome the demon Śambara, wishes to instal Śrī Rāma on the throne. The great Brahmarṣi Vaśiṣṭha fixes an auspicious time for the coronation. The ministers and the people in one voice acclaim the king's decision. Sīta and Rāma are initiated into the preparatory ritual of the worship of Nārāyaṇa. Thus when everything is set for the coronation, like a bolt from the blue, Kaikēyī's unaccountable attitude shatters the whole ceremony. When such devastating plight has overtaken such exalted people, how can the humble gōpikas feel assured that they can pull through their rite without failure?

Yet another gōpika, who is familiar with literary works, draws upon a known example from nature to assert that none can escape or resist the flings of Fate.

*Rātrirgamiṣyati Bhaviṣyati suprabhātam
Bhāsvānudeṣyati haṣiṣyati paṅkaja Śrīḥ!
Ittham vichintayati padmagatē dvirēphē
Hā hanta hanta naḥinim gaja ujjahāra*

A bee which has settled on a lotus flower remains in it, unaware of the approach of the evening and the closing up of the petals. It has to stay therein for the night. It hopes that the night soon wears out, that the sun rises and the lotus opens; and that it can then go out and roam about in freedom. Even as this hope cheers it, an elephant enters the pond and suddenly plucks away the lotus with its stalk and casts it on the bank. This sudden quirk of fate has shattered the hope of the bee for freedom. It remains imprisoned in the lotus. The gōpika draws, from this familiar occurrence, the lesson that unless God is in their favour, their dreams of union with Kṛṣṇa and their endeavours in that direction may merely end in smoke.

The gōpikas have fallen into a mood of dejection for fear of failure of their *Vrata*. Then a gōpika, well-versed in philosophic lore, rises to cheer them up. She begins with an assurance that all works, good or bad, yielding happiness or sorrow, are bound to dissipate, the moment we approach God and see Him. “*Kṣiyantē chāśya Karmāṇi tasmin dṛṣṭē parāvarē.*” The Upaniṣad declares that the moment we see Him, all works (Karmas) disintegrate and get dissolved. Works fall into three categories. Works accumulated in all births from beginningless time form one category, *Sanchita Karma*. From this pile of good and bad works (yielding respectively happiness and sorrow) a portion is demarcated to be enjoyed or endured during the present life in this body in all the states of experience—waking or dreaming or sleeping. And this is called *Prārabdha Karma*. Works done in the present birth will be added up to the remainder of the pile for future births; and this reserve forms the third category of *Āgāmi Karma*. The moment we approach God and see Him, the entire *Sanchita Karma*, according to the Upaniṣad, is burnt to ashes, in the same way as a pile of cotton is burnt up by a spark

of fire. *Yadhēṣikatūlam hyagnou prōtam pradūyēta ēvam hāsyā sarvē pāpmāṇaḥ pradūyēntē*). Again, Āgāmi Karma does not cling to us, in the same way as drops of water on the lotus leaf. (*Yathā puṣkara palāṣē āpō naṣṭiṣyante*) But we have to endure the Prārabdha Karma during the present life; there is no escape from it. At the end of this life, people who have seen God will attain Him and become inseparable from Him.

The three categories of Karma are like (1) the arrow kept in the quiver (Sanchita) (2) the arrow discharged from the bow (Prārabdha) and (3) the arrow taken in hand but not yet fitted to the bow (Āgāmi). When the warrior goes to the battle-field, he discharges an arrow at the enemy and keeps another ready in his hand. If the enemy surrenders, he will not fit the arrow, which is kept ready in his hand, to the bow; he will not draw any more shafts from the quiver either. But the arrow he has discharged will not turn back, it goes and strikes the target. So there is no need to fear about our past works. We need not feel anxious that we should free ourselves of our sins before we attempt to reach Him. If only we make a serious effort and reach Him, our works fall off of their own accord. After we endure the Prārabdha Karma, we are sure to attain union with Him. Let us therefore shed all fear and perform this ritual and reach Kṛṣṇa.

At this stage, another gōpika raises a doubt as she is not convinced of the rationale of the previous speaker. Quoting authorities, she maintains that every one has to endure the consequences of actions done by him, be they good or bad, even if the time taken for such clearance extends over eons of time.

*“Nābhuktaṁ kṣīyatē Karma Kalpakōṣi śatairapi
Avaśya manubhōktavyam Kṛtamkarma śubhāśubham”*

Wherein do the Upaniṣads declare that the pile of Karma does not cling but dissolves without the doer experiencing its consequences? To this the philosopher-gōpika gives the following elucidation:—“This doubt disappears if you but know what makes works good or evil and how they yield results. We imagine that happiness results from meritorious works and sorrow from sinful ones. Let us remember that work in itself, whether good or bad, is lifeless. Again, it dies the moment it is done. How then can it yield fruit? Only after the lapse of some time can the

fruit materialise; but by that time the particular work which is its cause ceases to exist; even because it has no life-force (chaitanya) in it. But some maintain that even while karma completes itself, it generates an unprecedented force (apūrva śakti) that remains and produces the result. Even this explanation is not correct. It is God alone who determines the fruits of our works and not the karmas themselves. God has laid down certain laws regulating our conduct and made them known to us through “śrutis,” scriptures intuitively ‘heard,’ and “Smṛtis,” scriptures resulting from deliberate ‘meditation.’ If we abide by them, God will be pleased and we become happy. If we violate them, God will be displeased and we come to grief. Thus, our happiness and sorrow flow respectively from God’s pleasure and displeasure, and not directly from our karmas. Whatever action of ours pleases Him becomes meritorious action; and whatever displeases Him becomes sinful action. We may have incurred His wrath all along by innumerable misdeeds; still, if today we earn His gracious goodwill, He will Himself forget His previous ire and mercifully forgive us. With this, all our past sins wear out. Once He begins to love us, He will not mind the lapses that we unwittingly fall into. Thus are we saved from their painful consequences. Among the thousand names by which God is praised in “*Viṣṇu Sahasra nāma*,” we find the appellation ‘*Avijñātā*’ which means ‘One who is incapable of knowing the misdeeds, committed unwittingly and without deliberation, of those on whom His grace has descended.’ We need not therefore hesitate to undertake this ritual, for fear that it is not for sinners like us. Once we reach Him, all our sins will surely get dissolved.” It is only after they reach and see Him that their sins disappear. But how are they to do this? Doubts still assail the gōpikas about the possibility of their reaching Him; for their sins, they fear, will obstruct their way and make it hard to proceed.

Then another gōpika rises to allay their fears. “Why do we fear? Are we not women? Have we forgotten the reassuring lesson taught by Draupadi? Caught in an inescapable and dishonourable plight in the court of the Kauravas, has she not got prompt succour by invoking and praising the name of Kṛṣṇa who is miles away from the scene? The Lord may be beyond our reach. But His name, if we meditate on it, ever remains our prop, removes the obstacles and takes us to the Lord. The sages

have declared that constant utterance of God's names rectifies all lapses, supplies all wants and brings all sacrificial rites and penances to a perfect end.

*Yasya smṛtyācha namōktyā tapō yajña kriyādiṣu
nyūnam sampūrṇatām yāti sadyo vandētamachyutam*

For us the highest means (Uttama sādhana) is to glorify the name of Kṛṣṇa; and that is sure to destroy our sins which prevent us from reaching him." Kṛṣṇānusmaraṇam param.

Before launching upon any religious rite, it is usual for Brāhmins and others to invoke the blessings of Vighnēśwara, so that the sins that stand as obstacles between them and their rites are eliminated. The gōpikas here glorify the name of Kṛṣṇa for the same purpose. The chanting of the Lord's name is a universal practice, equally essential to those who perform rituals, to those who acquire knowledge, to those who abide in devotion, and to the supplicants who, surrendering their all, seek refuge in God.

God is an embodiment of infinite mercy. We may not reach the height of devotion and glorify His name with fervour. Yet, when we turn to Him, show just an orientation towards Him by merely uttering His name, He hastens towards us and favours us with His *darśan*. Again, it is His nature to see that the wish of His devotee is fulfilled, even when His own wish remains unfulfilled. Śrī Rāma loses his kingdom and leaves it; he goes into the woods; later, he feels the acute pangs of separation from Sita. Yet, he goes to the rescue of his devotee, Sugrīva; and offers refuge to his supplicant, Vibhīṣaṇa, and brings about their coronation. When Arjuna takes a vow to kill Saindhava before sunset, Kṛṣṇa makes the day look like night, just to enable Arjuna to keep his pledge. Unable to endure the severe harassment and routing of Arjuna at the hands of Bhīṣma, Kṛṣṇa wields the disc and gets ready to use it in open violation of his undertaking not to touch a weapon. Provided we show a genuine orientation towards Him, God Himself will toil for us and take us to Himself. There is thus no point in keeping ourselves aloof from Him under the fear of our sins.

Just then, another girl breaks out: "You have said that by seeing God, all our accumulated sins disappear; and that lapses

in the future do not cling to us. Good. But we have to endure the *prārabdha*. So till this is liquidated, there is no prospect of our attaining Lord Kṛṣṇa. How unendurable is this plight! Even if we perform this ritual, have we not to wait for his union till the bodies fall off? How can we endure this long separation! How frightening is the prospect and how miserable our plight!"

Then a gōpika who has understood the efficacy of complete self-surrender (*śaranāgati*) rises to give reassuring comfort. "This sad plight is only for those who accept other means of attaining Him—such as *karmamārga*, performance of sacrificial rites, *jñānamārga*, acquisition of knowledge, and *bhaktimārga*, development of devotion. Such people have to wait till their bodies fall off to attain Him. But we are different. We have pinned our faith to Him as the *only* means to attain Him. 'Nārāyaṇane,' Nārāyaṇa alone, is our means. Therefore He will destroy our *prārabdha karma* also and receive us unto Himself. Of this, there is no doubt. The scriptures which declare that there is no escape from karmas, and that release comes only after their consequences are completely experienced, refer only to those who adopt means other than God. Once they cling to God as their only means, karmas lose their power to yield fruits. The Śāstra declares: "Fire burns", but fire fails to burn where water is present. In a similar way, we have to understand the general principle that karma yields fruit. To us, who cling to Him as our sole means, works do not become obstacles. When we praise Him as 'Māyanai,' 'Dāmōdaranai,' all our sins fall off of their own accord.

It may appear strange as to how these innocent maidens, who cannot distinguish the right hand from the left, have such range of understanding of these spiritual issues. But the doubt clears when we remember that these girls have often listened to the discourses and discussions held on scriptures and epics by sages like Gārga and Sāndipani at Nanda's court. Thus have they acquired proficiency in religious lore by constant and attentive listening.

The five hymns form the first phase of the ritual. In the first hymn, the gōpikas elucidate that the aim of the ritual is union with the Lord; that the means to the goal is Nārāyaṇa Himself; and that all those who have the eagerness to perform the Vrata

qualify to participate in it. The second hymn describes how the participants have to adhere to the principles prescribed by scriptures and tradition, and observe certain restraints in food, speech and conduct. The third hymn declares that by performing the rite, not only the gōpikas but all the world benefits by having plenty of harvest and milk-products. The fourth hymn is the gōpika's invocation to the Lord of the clouds (Parjanya or Varuṇa) to shower all the rain needed to make the world a land of plenty, besides giving them a refreshing bath. In the fifth hymn, the gōpikas declare with certainty that their ritual yields fruit, as all their sins obstructing their attainment of God disappear with constant repetition of God's name. Though they talk of the ritual of the bath for general commendation, their real endeavour is to attain Kṛṣṇa and remain inseparable from him. Men and women of all castes and communities, who have a taste for spiritual life, can participate in this rite; only, they must have a firm conviction that Kṛṣṇa is their sole objective and that he is the only means to reach the goal. They must observe the injunctions regarding food and the restraints on speech and behaviour. The ritual bestows ample material prosperity; it results in rewarding spiritual exaltation and attainment of God. This Vrata yields a harvest of God's magnificence (Bhagavat samṛddhi) and a plenitude of godly souls (Bhāgavata samṛddhi) and a contingent of great preceptors and a climate of immaculate living (*sadācārya lābha*).

It is usual for those who perform rituals to purify themselves of all sins by observing certain principles and by offering prayers at dawn and dusk (*Sandhyāhīnaḥ aśuchiḥ*). They consider that by worshipping Mitra (Sun) early in the morning and Varuṇa (the Cloud) in the evening and by chanting some holy incantations, all their sins are consumed in their effulgence. They pray to the morning Sun to give them rich harvests and plenty of milk and to keep them stainless of sin. They pray to Varuṇa in the evening to destroy all the sins committed by them unwittingly or deliberately, all the sins that result from unbecoming conduct towards people of whose godliness they are unaware, and all the sins that accrue to them from close association with others. Sandhyāvandana thus is a purificatory rite. The gōpikas do not qualify for the performance of Sandhyāvandana. So they substitute for it constant repetition of God's name and discoursing on His glory to achieve

the same result of self-purification. Uttering His name, listening to His glories and feeling His presence everywhere, secure for the gōpikas self-purification and fitness to undertake the rite.

In this Mārgaśr̥ṣa Vrata, Āṇḍāl worships the idol of Vaṭapatrasāyi in her native village (Srivilliputtūr); but with her virile imagination she visions in it Lord Kṛṣṇa of Nandavraja. Lord Kṛṣṇa is not different from the Supreme (Para) and the Quiescent (Vyūha) manifestations of God. He is identical with them. Śrīmannārāyaṇa is both the Cause and the Effect, the All-knowing Creator (sarvajña) who pervades (vyāpaka), and supports (ādhāra), ordains (niyāmaka) and preserves (rakṣaka) and possesses (śeṣi) the entire universe. That is why the gōpikas identify Kṛṣṇa with the Supreme (Paratattva) in the very first hymn (Nārāyaṇanē) as the only Adorable. In the second hymn, they worship the Lord Śeṣasāyi who is resting on the snake-bed in the sea of milk as Vyūhāvatāra. In the third hymn, they adore the Vibhavāvatāra, the magnificence of the Lord who emerges from the sea of milk and manifests Himself as Vāmana and grows to the pinnacle of glory as Trivikrama, the Lord of the three worlds. In the fourth hymn, the gōpikas pray that Varuṇa might bestow plentiful showers of rain that can stand comparison with the endless array of shafts discharged from the bow of Śrī Rāma, the unrivalled archer. Thus they offer their reverent homage to Śrī Rāma who has, by his exemplary character, propagated and showered righteousness in such a way as to destroy evil in the world. In the fifth hymn, they praise the Lord Dāmōdara who, in order to uplift the world, has made himself humble, has allowed himself to be bound by Yaśōda and has surrendered to the gōpikas. Thus they have been adoring (Paratattva) the Supreme and Absolute Nārāyaṇa, the Quiescent Form (Vyūha) of Śeṣasāyi, the glorious manifestations (Vibhavāvatāras) of Vāmana, Śrī Rāma and Śrīkṛṣṇa and the (Archāvatara) Adorable Image of Vaṭapatrasāyi and the Immanent Spirit (Antaryāmin). By praising 'Māyanai,' the gōpikas render homage to the Supreme, the Mysterious One, who sports in miraculous deeds and creates the universe, sustains it and absorbs it into Himself. By extolling Dāmōdaranai they bring this Abstract Supreme nearer to us as the easily-accessible Kṛṣṇa who has allowed himself to be bound by Yaśōda.

With this we come to the end of the first phase of the ritual. The next ten days are occupied with awakening ten gōpikas; and then the effort is directed to waking up successively the guards at the entrance to Nanda's mansion, the Security Officer of the mansion itself, Nanda, Yaśōda, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma together, Nīladēvi, and then finally Lord Kṛṣṇa. They meet Kṛṣṇa and explain their requirements; and finally, in the 29th hymn, they crave for the highest objective of human life (Paramapuruṣārtha), namely, the supreme blessing of His constant companionship, with opportunities of endless service. Thus, this ritual ostensibly appears to be a ceremonial morning bath, in the performance of which a musical instrument called "*parai*" is to be secured. But in reality it is an immersion in spiritual experience and its aim constant companionship with God and unbroken service to Him.

*Māyanai mannuvaḍamadurai maindanai
 ttūyaperunīr yamunaitturaivanai
 āyarkulattinil tōṇṟu maṇivīlakkai
 ttāyaikkudal vīlakkam śeyda Dāmōḍaranai
 tūyōmāy vandunām tūmalar tūvittoḷudu
 vāyināl pāḍi manattināl śindikka
 ppōyapiḷaiyum pugudaruvā ninṟanavum
 tīyinil tūśāgum śeppēlōrempāvāy*

Summary.

Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa's miraculous deeds evoke reverent wonder everywhere. He is the outstanding Leader of Northern Mathura which is ever closely associated with godliness. The ferry of the pure and deep waters of the Jamuna, being his favourite haunt, has become his distinguishing mark of identification. He is the auspicious radiating light of the gōpa family; and eager to bring effulgence to Yaśōda's womb he has allowed himself to be bound by her and thus has become Dāmōḍara. Let us purify ourselves as we approach him; let us worship him with fresh flowers; let us join our hands in reverence; let us sing his praises; and let us, with all our hearts, meditate on him. Should we do so, all our

accumulated sins of the past and the entire pile of sins which is to accrue to us in the future will be burnt to ashes like cotton in fire. Let us therefore join in glorifying his name.

Commentary.

1. *Māyanai*

Let us begin our rite with the glorification of the Mysterious. One with awe-striking attributes and miraculous deeds. *Māya* is that power of God which works breath-taking miracles. It is beyond the reach of the mind; words fail to describe it. The *Vēdapuruṣa* himself admits that God is beyond the power of conception and expression. To know Him, to meditate on Him and to reach Him are beyond human capacity. Those who know this truth are, as the *Upaniṣad* declares, the real knowers. Such an Inaccessible Being allows Himself to be seen always by released souls in *Vaikunṭha*, the Heavenly Abode. The *Upaniṣad* says: ‘*Sadā paśyanti sūrayaḥ.*’ That such a Supreme, who is inaccessible to thought and speech and who creates, sustains and ordains the universe, should become a familiar and helpful companion to those in the Supreme Abode is a matter which strikes us with wonder. It is only His will, His mysterious power, His *māya*, that brings this about. *Māya* does not mean the sudden disappearance of a thing that appears to be present. It means Knowledge taking shape as Will. It is by His Volition that He, who is unborn, takes birth and reaching *Nandavraja* indulges in mischievous pranks like stealing fresh butter. Whether in the Supreme Abode or here in *Vrēpalle*, whether as the Inaccessible One or as the easily-accessible *Kṛṣṇa*, the way He submits to His companions, particularly in *Vrēpalle*, allowing them to bind him or beat him, stuns us into admiration of His mysterious ways. So it is that the *gōpikas* begin their praises with ‘*Māyanai.*’ Those who know the true nature of *Bhagavān* are struck with wonder at the mysterious ways of both the inaccessible Supreme and the easily-accessible and familiar incarnation. As is said in the *Gīta*, one is struck with wonder when one speaks about Him, or hears about Him or sees Him; and however much one may talk or hear about Him, it is beyond one’s capacity to know Him.

“*Āṣcharyavadvadati, āṣcharyavat paśyati,
āṣcharyavat śruṇōti, śrutvāpyēnam,
vēda nachaiva kaśchit.*”

This awe-inspiring quality is not confined to the Supreme State only. It operates even when He takes the form of man and descends into this world and lives as one among us. When Kṛṣṇa is born as the child of Dēvaki and Vasudēva, Vasudēva expresses his awe on seeing him. “*Jātōsi dēvadēvēṣa!*” “You are the Lord of the immortals, the nityasūras, the eternally-wise; but even they are incapable of looking on your dazzling splendour; how gracious of you that you have condescended to become my son! You, who have no birth, have undertaken without any hesitation to enter the womb of Dēvaki and stay there for twelve months before taking birth—all this you have done like any common human being who is bound by his past karma. How gracious of you!” To indicate that he is the God of gods, Kṛṣṇa has chosen to be born accoutred with the conch, the disc and the mace; and Vasudēva in his ecstacy addresses him as ‘*Śankha chakra gadādhara.*’ Thus, He has shown by his divine weapons His supremeness; and by being born of a woman’s womb His easy accessibility, thus exciting the admiration and wonder of all. Hence it is that the gōpikas praise him as māyanai or the Mysterious One. Whichever aspect we contemplate, His supremacy or His accessibility, we are struck alike with awe.

2. *Mannu vaḍamadurai maindanai*

We praise thee as the Master, the Nāyaka of Northern Mathura, which has an inalienable association with God.

The Supreme Soul, that Changeless One, who remains ever the same in the Heavenly Abode as He reveals Himself to the Everwise, the nityasūras, has assumed different incarnations in this city of Mathura. This Mathura was the Siddhāśrama, the sacred hermitage of fulfilment, where the Lord manifested Himself as Vāmana; this again was the place in which Śatrughna located his capital after killing the demon Lavaṇa. This very place was chosen for the descent of the Lord as Kṛṣṇa, to become the child of Dēvaki and Vasudēva. Thus is Mathura sanctified with unbroken.

association with God. It is its sacredness that has earned for it the praises of saints and seers, Āḷwārs and Mahārṣis:

*Mathurā nāma nagarī punyā pāpaharī śubhā
yasyām jātō jagannāthaḥ sākṣādvīṣṇuḥ sanātanaḥ*

Mathura is as well known as Vaikuṇṭha. The Heavenly Abode, Paramapada, is formed entirely of Sattvaguṇa (the tendency of good) without even a trace of the other guṇās, the tendencies of passion (rajas) and of inertia (tamas). Hence it knows no change; it ever remains the same. The peculiarity with Mathura is that, though situated in Nature (Prakṛti) which is composed of the three guṇas, it remains the same, unchanged. Vaikuṇṭha is what he has left; so it cannot be his capital. Mathura alone is Kṛṣṇa's capital; it is where he is born and what he has considered his own. Again, Mathura is a meritorious place (puṇyabhūmi). Just as merit is the means of obtaining the desired happiness, this city is the means to reach the Blissful One, whom the whole world wishes to attain. Mathura is the cleanser of sins (Pāpa hari) as it removes the sins that stand as obstacles to attaining Kṛṣṇa. Apart from being the means of securing the desired end and of removing the obstacles in the process, Mathura, considered in itself, deserves to be our destination, as reaching it our wishes are fulfilled. It is into this city that Śrīmannārāyaṇa, who reigns supreme in His Heavenly abode, has chosen to descend out of His own will and without losing an iota of His divine nature. The Lord of the Universe, who is unborn, takes birth in this city as a child of one of His creatures. Here in Mathura alone does this happen: the Ordainer (niyāmaka) of the world condescends to submit to the control of one who, like the rest of the creation, is to be submissive to Him. It is here again that the all-pervasive Viṣṇu Himself becomes one of the objects pervaded by Him and assumes form and name. It is in Mathura again that the Eternal Being, who is ever-existent, appears to have come into existence only when He is born in Mathura and is non-existent before. Mathura has been praised by the seers as the most sacred place on earth; and they have sought refuge in it.

Kṛṣṇa is the strong man of the city. "Maindanai" also means 'a strong man.' Such is Kṛṣṇa's strength that the moment he is born, he makes the fetters release, of their own accord, his

father's feet. Before he attains youth he puts to death Kamsa; such is his magnificent might. "Maindanai" also means 'child' and 'king.' He is the child of Mathura; though he is not technically its king, he has wielded power that is as great as a king's. It is Māyanai, that Mysterious worker of miracles, that has become the Lord of Mathura.

3. *Tūya perunīr yamunait tuṛaivanai*

They praise him as the One who delights in roaming about the banks of the Yamuna of pure and deep waters.

They characterise the river Yamuna as sacred. Mathura is the city fit for the residence of the Lord who leaves the Heavenly Abode. The river Virajā which flows by the Heavenly Abode has come down as the river Yamuna, so as to be near the place of His descent. The abode and the river, like the disc and the conch, follow Him wherever He goes. During His incarnation as Śrī Rāma, they have turned respectively into Ayōdhya and Sarayu; and in this incarnation as Kṛṣṇa, they become Mathura and Yamuna. The sanctity of Yamuna is revealed when, knowing the will of God, Yamuna yields passage through its waters to Vasudēva as he comes carrying the child Kṛṣṇa.

*"Yamunām chāti gambhīrām nānāvarta jhaṣākulām
Vasudēvo vahan Kṛṣṇam jānu mātṛōdakō yayau.*

The majestic Yamuna, full of fish and other aquatic animals, and in terrifying spate with its devouring waters and whirl-pools, was crossed by Vasudēva, who was carrying the child Kṛṣṇa over his head, with much ease as though he was fording a stream of knee-deep waters."

During the incarnation of Śrī Rāma, Sita prays, with folded hands, to the Gōdāvari and requests her to inform Śrī Rāma of her sad plight and of Rāvaṇa carrying her away. When Śrī Rāma in his search for Sita comes to the river and enquires the whereabouts of Sita, Gōdāvari remains mute for fear of Rāvaṇa, though he is away in far off Lanka. But Yamuna gives way to Vasudēva, who is carrying Kṛṣṇa, without any hesitation or fear that Kamsa is close at hand. Hence her sacredness. Moreover, Kṛṣṇa and

the gōpikas sport in her waters; they indulge in sucking the water into their mouths and releasing it in spouts. It is said that the waters released from the mouths of the gōpikas touch the nether-lip of Kṛṣṇa himself and become sanctified. When such is the case, it is certain that Yamuna's waters are the most sacred.

There is a secret underlying the episode of Vasudēva's crossing of the river. Seeing Vasudēva advancing with his precious burden, Kṛṣṇa, Yamuna which is in high spate subsides and yields a passage; and Vasudēva easily wades to the other bank without having to swim, without having to make use of a boat. In a similar way, if we bear Śrīkṛṣṇa in our hearts, the tide of delusion subsides; and we can cross easily the sea of samsāra without seeking the aid of any other means. The sea of non-self then becomes a shallow knee-deep stream.

The waters of Yamuna are not merely pure; they are full and bottomless, too; so full as to serve as the sporting arena for the Lord of the Universe, so deep as not to get dried up with the heat of the gōpikas' lovelornness, but to contain and absorb it and bring cool refreshment to them. And Kṛṣṇa is referred to as one who delights in wandering about the banks of Yamuna: "Yamunā tīra vihāra rasika." For fear of Kamsa, people do not mention his name and place but refer to him as the wanderer on the banks of Yamuna. It is a habit with Kṛṣṇa to roam about the ferry where women frequent—a ferry, so to say, where pearls can be caught! Lord Kṛṣṇa is the Pilot who waits by the shore of the river of non-self, so as to be ready to ferry across souls who cry for protection.

4. *Āyar kulattinil tōṇṇu maṇivīḷakkai*

He is the scintillating diamond-light of the gōpa family.

There is no scope for all the Lord's attributes to shine forth, when He is in the Heavenly Abode. The same Supreme Being shines like bright light when He reaches the Nandavraja after taking birth in Mathura. Though brightness is natural to Him, it does not manifest itself in other places; but in this place of intense darkness, it flashes in all its effulgence. It is in the Incarnation of Kṛṣṇa only, and that, too, while in Vrēpalle, that all the attributes

of the Supreme Lord have shone forth in all their splendour. Though God is immanent in all objects and at all places, we say "there is His manifestation" only when He discloses Himself at any particular place. Thus it is that Āṇḍāl says "Tōṇṇum; there in the family of the gōpas He has manifested Himself." The sun is not born in the east; though by his association with it in the morning, he seems to rise there. Similarly, the Divine Being appears to have been born in Vrēpalle; but the truth is that He, who has always been there, now emerges into sight; and this manifestation is diamond-light which shines always, unlike other lights that are kindled today but become extinguished tomorrow. When in Heavenly Abode, He glows dim like a light in daytime but when He descends into this world He blazes like a diamond shorn of its impurities.

5. *Tāyaikkuḍal viḷakkamṣeyda Dāmōdaranai*

He is the Dāmōdara who has illumined his mother Yaśōda's womb.

Kṛṣṇa comes to be known as Dāmōdara, as the rope by which he has been bound by Yaśōda leaves an indelible mark on his stomach. When people see this mark, they praise Yaśōda's good fortune, in as much as the lord, whose stomach holds all the worlds, submits to his mother and allows her to bind his stomach with a rope. By this humility in getting bound he has brought fame to his mother Yaśōda; and people declare that her womb is the most fruitful! In a similar way, people have glorified Kausalya that with her exceptionally bright son she has stood forth with a pleasing radiance (*Kausalyā suśubhē tēna putrēṇa ami toujasā*). It is only to release us from the bondage of the non-self that Kṛṣṇa allows himself to be bound. By meditating on his getting bound, we get released from our bonds. He submits to us by his own graciousness and remains bound for all time. Let us therefore meditate on this gracious Dāmōdara.

In order to free themselves from the obstacles of sins, the gōpikas praise the Lord beginning with 'Māyanai,' the mysterious Worker of miracles, and closing with 'Dāmōdaranai,' the gracious Lord who submits to his devotees. Māya is the wonderful power that can make the unmanifest nature to take shape as the visible

universe. The Primal Cause of this world possesses that power (Māya). That Cause has descended into Mathura by His own volition as the child of Dēvaki and Vasudēva; and is born in prison. The moment he is born he sees to it that the manacles binding his father's feet fall off of their own accord. He moves freely as though he is himself the king of Mathura. That Lord of Heaven, that Cause of the world, manifests as pure and effulgent essence to a mind of divine nature that is constantly in tune with the Infinite. The mind that is till then enveloped in darkness is itself the prison. The prisoners, Dēvaki and Vasudēva, represent the mind that is filled with purity and is closely associated with divine nature. It is in that pure consciousness that the Lord manifests Himself in His true form. This is how Kṛṣṇa is born of Dēvaki and Vasudēva in the prison. Instantaneously, the fetters that have bound Vasudēva fall off; and holding Kṛṣṇa, he crosses Yamuna with ease. Having crossed Yamuna which represents the river of bondage to non-self, Vasudēva leaves him at Yaśōda's bedside as her child. The great seers who are full of immaculate purity and who have had God's *darśan* present Bhagavattatva as submissive to Incantation (Mantra) and leave It in her charge as though It is her child. Yaśōda is herself the Incantation. The gōpas in Vṛṇpalle are the community of devotees; and Yaśōda is the Incantation that they regularly chant and meditate on. To say that Lord Kṛṣṇa, the diamond-light, has made Yaśōda's womb resplendent, is as much as to say that the greatness of the incantation accrues from the God-phenomenon that shines forth on its account. This Bhagavat-tattva becomes so soft and yielding as to make itself liable to be fastened by the band of devotion, as easily as Kṛṣṇa has been bound by Yaśōda. If we meditate on God with devotion and chant the incantation, God stays in our hearts as if bound therein.

In this manner do the gōpikas endeavour to get rid of their sins and remove the obstacles to their attainment of God. They begin with praising the Primal Cause, Śrīmannārāyaṇa, who is the Supreme and beyond reach, and end with glorifying the easily-accessible Dāmōdara, who is before them.

6. *Tūyōmāy vandunām*

"Purifying ourselves with this meditation, (we shall go to serve him; and our sins will surely vanish.)"

The purity the gōpikas speak of is not by any means the cleansing of the body; it is their habit not to cleanse their bodies if they wash their hair and *vice versa*. They do not have a full bath. How then do they claim purity? They know that the only thing that purifies is association with God and nothing else. Without that association, no other kind of purity can constitute real purity. Constant quest and meditation on close association with God make them pure; and it is this purity that is necessary for God-realisation. Vibhīṣaṇa does not purify himself with a plunge in the sea when he approaches Śrī Rāma for succour. He approaches Rāma with his heart chastened, as it is set on surrender to him. The fitness of Arjuna to listen to the Charamaślōka on the battle-field is of this kind and not of external cleanliness. Draupadi's purity is of the heart; she happens to be in her 'periods' when she seeks refuge in Kṛṣṇa from the outrage perpetrated by the Kauravas. To those who pin their faith to God as the only means and the only refuge, no other purification is needed. This does not imply that we should deliberately give up external cleanliness. What makes one worthy of God's succour is the firm conviction that whatever be one's natural condition, one is inalienably related to God. It is because Sugrīva knows Vibhīṣaṇa to have this firm conviction that he declares that his mind has recognised Vibhīṣaṇa's as pure. (*mama chā pyantarātmayam śuddham vētti Vibhīṣaṇam*) Vibhīṣaṇa's purity again owes its existence to Rāma-connection.

The gōpikas feel thus: "If we approach Kṛṣṇa with pure hearts, our sins disappear. Kṛṣṇa cannot endure our walking towards him as it involves strain to us. He will, indeed, consider our attempt at approaching him as a great favour done to him. His nature is such as to urge him to make a move towards us. Should we, who have no other ulterior motive in meeting him than to have the pleasure of meeting him, reach him, he will feel hurt and miserable at the strain we have undergone; his heart melts and he cannot but fulfil our wish. But as we *know* that he is our only means to attaining him, we hesitate to put our foot forward. Doubts assail us. Can we and should we move forward and reach him? If we do, are we not ascribing to ourselves independence to act by ourselves? We shirk this charge of kartṛtva and prefer giving up the attempt. But on a moment's reflection on the superb figure of Kṛṣṇa whom we eagerly desire to attain,

we feel that we cannot stop our effort. We must go to him, even if it be a lapse on our part. He is our means; he will himself protect us; and there is no need for us to hasten. True; but this thought is powerless to restrain us. So we move ahead purified with the conviction that we are closely related to him and that there is no ulterior motive in this quest and that all we seek is to meet him and serve him.

7. *Tūmalar tūvit toḷudu:*

‘Let us worship him by casting on him pure flowers.’

What gives purity to flowers is the devotion of the worshipper. Any flower, when offered with devotion, becomes sanctified. Hence it is that Kṛṣṇa has declared: “*Patram, Puṣpam, Phalam, Tōyam yōmē bhaktiyā prayacchati.*” What makes an offering—be it leaf or flower, fruit or water, acceptable is the devotional fervour moistening the heart of the worshipper. While making the offering of flowers, it is not necessary that they should be carefully placed on the head or on the feet of the Deity. They may be cast anywhere on the Deity, but only with devotional fervour; and they are accepted gracefully as His service. When you make salutation to the Supreme Being, you have to observe the prescribed process. But Yāmunāchārya says that even if you do not follow it but merely salute Him in your own way, that salutation cleanses you of all sins and gives you good results. In the same way, God does not mind your not observing the procedure prescribed for the offering of flowers. By casting the flower on the Lord and thus serving Him, the hand is merely justifying its existence. As Śaṅkarāchārya has declared: “why waste so much labour in wandering about the country, culling flowers? Why not offer the flower of your heart?”

It is said that flowers that should be offered to God are of eight categories: Flowers of (1) Non-violence (*Ahimsa*) (2) Control of senses or continence (*Indriya nigraḥ*) (3) Commiseration for all (*sarva bhūtagāya*) (4) Endurance or fortitude (*Kṣama*) (5) Knowledge or wisdom (*Jñāna*) (6) Penance (*Tapas*) (7) Truth (*Satyam*) (8) Meditation (*Dhyānam*).

*Ahimsā prathamam puṣpam, puṣpamindriyamigraḥ
Sarvabhūtagāyāpuṣpam, Kṣamāpuṣpam Viśeṣataḥ
Jñānam puṣpam, tapaḥ puṣpam, dhyānam puṣpam tadhaivacha
Satyamaṣṭa vidham puṣpam Viśṇoḥ prītikaram bhavēt*

These eight are the most pleasing flowers for Viṣṇu. The possession of these qualities of the soul should not be regarded as means of release from the bondage of non-self; nor should the thought be entertained that the person possessing them is himself capable of effecting such release. These qualities are to be taken as dedicated instruments to the service and worship of God; and then their possession itself is tantamount to adoring God with flowers.

While our hands are thus engaged in service, let us sing with our throats and meditate with our minds.

8. *Vāyināl pāḍi manattināl śindikka*

"Bhagavān feels hurt in his mind when he sees us undergoing the strain of walking towards him to reach him. He regrets that he has delayed till we have gone up to him; he feels he should have come to us earlier. Should we praise him, he feels all the more embarrassed. Let us win his favour in full, by reaching his presence and glorifying him with our hymns, and meditating on him with our minds. It is natural that one thinks before one speaks: 'manaḥ pūrvō vāguttaraḥ.' But when devotional fervour climaxes, the tongue goes on wagging God's name without any prompting from the mind. The organs of the body engage themselves in rendering service to Him without any aid or direction from the mind. The mind itself gets always preoccupied with thoughts of the Divine. Thus are the thought, speech and action, engrossed in God. No wonder that, without any effort of ours, our sins perish of their own accord."

9. *Pōyapṭaiyūm pugudaruvā ninṇānavum tiyinil tūṣāgum*

"Sins that have accumulated in the past and sins that are to accrue in the future, alike get burnt into ashes, as cotton that catches fire."

"As we worship Him and sing His praises and meditate on Him, God forgets our past sins and overlooks our future sins. The moment we reach Him, whatever sins we have deliberately committed before, become reduced to ashes like cotton in fire. They lose their power to yield results because God forgets them, once His grace is directed towards us. If after attaining Him

we fall unwittingly, and not deliberately, into sin, such lapses do not cling to us (as God's grace continues to forgive us), but slide down like water on the lotus leaf. Let us give up the doubts as to how we can reach God while our sins are frightfully heavy. Let us not extortain any fear. We shall proceed with our rite."

10. *ṣeppu ēlōrempāvāy*

"It is enough if we glorify him as *Māyanai* (Wielder of miraculous powers), *Mathurā nāyakā* (Master of Mathura), *Yamunā tīra Vihārī* (Carefree wanderer on the banks of Yamuna), *Nandavraja margaḷa dīpā* (the resplendent diamond-light of Nandavraja), *Yaśodā garbha prakāśaka* (One who has illumined Yaśoda's womb), *Dāmōdarā* (One who bears the mark of the fastening rope on the stomach). Let us repeat the names of God. With constant glorification of God's names we can be free from sins, past and future. Thus shorn of our sins, let us start our Vrata."



PĀŚURAM VI

PREFACE.

The first phase of the ritual now comes to a close. Gōḍāḍēvi has invited the other gōpikas to participate in it. In the eyes of the villagers, the fruit of this ritual is rain; but in the view of the gōpikas, the end is attainment of God. It is not possible to attain Him by means of self-effort. His grace alone can bring it about. He is the only means to attaining Him. On the first day itself they have declared that all those who ardently desire Him are eligible for participation in the ritual. Though they are full of conviction that He is the end to be attained and that He alone is the means to fulfil that end, they are aware that the senses which cannot remain inactive must be profitably employed in suitable activities concerned with the ritual. These are detailed on the second day. When the quest for spiritual experience is in progress, it is essential that those who co-operate with the effort should be gratefully remembered. And so, on the third day, they pray that the ritual they have undertaken should bring about the fulfilment of the aspirations of those who are helping them. On the fourth day, they declare that all the celestials will dutifully carry out the commands of those who, without entertaining any thought of drawing distinctions among the Deities, aspire for nothing else than the attainment of God. The aspirants for spiritual experience believe that constant repetition of God's names and meditation on His attributes will, under His grace, remove all obstacles to their progress. And this has been made clear by them on the fifth day.

Before actually launching on this ritual, they awaken ten gōpikas on ten successive days and proceed with them for the bath of spiritual experience.

Experience of God is distinctly personal; and each individual gōpika has her own instruments like love of God to realise it. Lord Kṛṣṇa whom they wish to attain has kept himself readily

accessible to them. The time, too, is ripe for such consummation, as the elders of the place are agreeable to it. When conditions are so propitious, how is it that the gōpikas, instead of making an isolated approach, each by herself, and enjoying communion with Kṛṣṇa, choose a united approach as a group, taking with them even those whom they rouse from sleep? There must be some deep motive underlying it. Let us try to examine it.

It is usual for people who wish to take a bath in a mighty stream or river to go in a batch for fear that, isolated as individuals, they stand a risk. The stream of God-experience is swift, bottomless and boundless. Those who wish to plunge into it cannot venture alone, each by himself, for fear that the foot may slip, the eye may wander and the mind falter. So they hold hands, each the other's, for mutual security as they enter the waters. Moreover, as the attributes of God rise, wave on wave, and drench them, they have to keep together holding one another's hands to derive fully the joy of that experience. The bliss becomes incomplete if enjoyed in isolation. It becomes perfect, only when it is shared with fellow-aspirants. It is said that even the nitya sūras in the Heavenly Abode with their resplendent bodies and strength of illimitable knowledge hold together in each other's company to enjoy the Lord. When such is the case, it is all the more essential for people with physical bodies and with limited knowledge to seek mutual aid while experiencing God. Moreover, God-experience takes the form of infinite bliss. To enjoy it in isolation as an individual smacks of extreme selfishness. "Ēka swādu na bhunjītha: Nothing that is sweet should be enjoyed without sharing with others." The nature of gōpikas is so refined that, even when they are surrounded by pleasures, they feel unhappy when they find that others are denied them. That is why they rouse the sleeping sisters and take them with them as they go to meet Kṛṣṇa, who is the embodiment of Infinite Bliss.

It is said that this process is inlaid with an esoteric convention (rahasya sāmpradāya). The "Tiruppāvai" is held to be the essence of all Vēdas and the propounder of the secrets of all the Upaniṣads. While courting the Supreme Being, the thought that He can be attained by self-effort should never be entertained. He should be approached only through those who have reached perfection in God-experience. Such devotees or preceptors bring

the individual seekers and the Supreme Being together. They are, therefore, called "puruṣakāras" or those who make the Supreme the "Puruṣa" that He is. "Puruṣa" is 'the one who gives plentifully.' (Purusanōti iti puruṣa). That 'Puruṣa' is God Himself as He supplies all the wants of humanity. The preceptor presents the aspiring individual-soul to God, as deserving of all His munificence; and proves to him that God is 'Puruṣa' the Giver-of-all; thus it is that he becomes 'Puruṣakāra.' In a similar way, Lakṣmi is called 'Puruṣakāra' as she also assumes mediation in bringing the individual-soul to God. It is only when He is so approached that His fullest grace flows towards the individual-self and yields him perfect bliss. In tune with this established convention, the gōpikas awaken ten devotees who abide in God-experience to lead them in their march to Lord Kṛṣṇa. The same convention is clearly enunciated in the Rāmāyaṇa when Vibhīṣaṇa seeks Rāma's succour. Having left behind his wife and children and the kingdom of Lanka, Vibhīṣaṇa crosses the ocean with four associates and stands in mid-air in front of Rāma. Instead of making his submission direct to Rāma who is before him, he turns to the devotees surrounding Rāma and craves them to intercede and make known to the great-souled Rāma, in whom all the worlds find refuge, that one, named Vibhīṣaṇa, has come there seeking succour from him

Sarvalōka śaranyāya-Rāghavāya mahātmanē

Nivēdayata mām kṣipram Vibhīṣaṇamupasthitam.

When Śrī Rāma decides on receiving him into his fold, he does not directly tell him so; he commissions Sugrīva to bring him, and accepts him when the latter presents him. Thus, it is an established convention to approach God not directly but through the mediation of great devotees. God's grace, too, flows on to us through the channel of mediators. It is only to unfold this secret that the gōpikas rouse the sleeping devotees and, with them to the fore, they reach the presence of Kṛṣṇa.

A doubt may disturb some minds as to how, when the love of Kṛṣṇa and desire to attain him are equally intense among all the youthful gōpikas in the village, some of them go to sleep while many others spend sleepless nights in the agony of separation from him. Only those who have spiritual experiences can under-

stand this situation. Spiritual experience is an intoxicant. It makes some to go to sleep where they are. It drives some others mad; and unable to stay steady, they roam about here and there. It makes some mute and others eloquent; it makes some to indulge in meaningless laughter, and others to immerse in unaccountable grief. In this medley of strange modes of behaviour caused by spiritual experience, it is not unnatural that some gōpikas should go to sleep while others remain awake. Sleep is the condition in which the mind withdraws from all sensory activities and takes rest; and the soul draws close to the Supreme. This happens to every individual-soul every day in sound sleep. The senses cease to grasp external objects; the mind is disburdened and free; and the soul appears to have become united with the Over-Soul. "Suṣṭi" means "being closely united with the Supreme." (Suṣṭu-apīṭo bhavati—Swapiti). In our daily sleep we are not conscious of this affinity with God, because Avidya (or ignorance of self) pervades us. But once we acquire knowledge of self and develop devotion to the Supreme, the senses withdraw from external objects and the mind turns to God and the soul nestles closer to the Over-Soul. This is the sleep that Yōgis experience.

*"Yāniśā sarva bhutānām tasyām jāgarti samyamī
Yāsām jagrati bhutāni sā niśā paśyato munēḥ."*

The objects that we worldlings see become veiled to yōgis and are not seen by them; thus where we are awake, they are asleep. We are in the dark with spiritual subjects which deal with God; but they are aware of them and are alert while we go to sleep. While our sleep is worldly and inert, theirs is the pure awareness of God-experience. It looks like sleep and is not. It is such mahā yōgis that the gōpikas awaken. There are different levels in this yōgic sleep; and these are revealed to us in the ten devotees whom the gōpikas awaken in their march. The first among them is a novice in God-consciousness; she is afraid that if she comes out and joins her friends, her new-found experience might melt away. She therefore clings to it and enjoys it alone in isolation. She is not aware of the convention that spiritual experience is to be shared with others and enjoyed in company. As the gōpikas who have been participating in the ritual have relished its deliciousness, they do not wish to enjoy it by themselves, each individually;

and so they invite this novice to come out and join them and share her joy with her friends.

In the second hymn, the gōpikas take a pledge that they will not do any thing that has not been done by the elders previously (ṣeṃyādana ṣeṃyōm). Śrī Rāma declares that giving protection to those who seek his succour is a cardinal principle, to which he adheres at all times; and it is in fulfilment of this pledge that he takes Vibhīṣaṇa under his wing. In a similar way, the gōpikas fulfil their pledge by adhering to the code of conduct, preached and exemplified by the ancients, that spiritual experiences should be enjoyed together in company and not alone in isolation; and that each should elucidate and share his experiences with others: "Bōdhayantaḥ parasparam." The ancients in the past, the great devotees, the ālwārs, and the Ever-wise (nitya sūras) in the Heavenly Abode have alike practised this principle; and in the wake of their example, the gōpikas decide upon awakening the sleeping devotees and inviting their participation in their ritual. When mutual aid is needed in experiencing the joys of the Heavenly Abode, it becomes all the more essential in experiencing Kṛṣṇa's love, which is the very acme of easy accessibility; and the very thought of it throws a devotee into a spell of self-forgetfulness. Seeing Śrī Rāma (who has not till then known lying asleep on bare earth, out in the open and away from the city) immersed in sound sleep even till sunrise, Viśwāmitra rouses him with the words, "Arise, thou tiger among men" (Uttiṣṭha naraśārdūla). Not having previous experience of union with Kṛṣṇa, this particular gōpika in the flush of excitement of this novel experience does not stir out but confines herself to her bed; and her friends awaken her with the word 'Arise.' (Uttiṣṭha).

*Puḷḷum ṣilumbinagāṇ puḷḷaraiyan kōyilil
 vellai viḷiṣaṅgin pēraravam keṭṭilaiyō
 piḷḷāy l eḷundirāy pēy mulainaṅcuṇḍu
 kaḷḷaccagaḍam kalakkaḷiya kkalōcci
 vellattaravil tuyilamarnda vittinai
 uḷḷattukkoṇḍu munivargaḷum yōgigaḷum
 meḷḷaveḷundu ariyenṇa pēraravam
 uḷḷam pugundu kuḷirndēlōrempāvāy*

Summary.

The birds have risen from their nests and they make noises as they poise for flight in search of food. From the temple of Viṣṇu, who is the Lord of their master Garuḍa, emerges the loud booming sound of the white conch summoning the devotees to worship. Haven't you, O girl, heard that sound? You might wonder how we have got up and who has awakened us. The munis and yōgis have securely installed in their hearts the Lord who, as child Kṛṣṇa, has sucked poison from the breasts of Pūtana (and her life with it), and who, crying for a feed, has stretched his leg, and with one kick smashed to smithereens the cart, whose shape is assumed by a demon with intent to kill him. They have their minds occupied with the Lord, the Creator of the universe, who in deep concern for its protection has lain in yōgic sleep, stretched on the cool, soft and delicate snake-bed in the ocean of milk. As these munis and yōgis slowly awaken themselves, they constantly repeat the name of Hari; and the loud sound caused by this repetition has penetrated into and refreshed our hearts and roused us from sleep. Bestir yourself and join us.

Commentary.

1. *pullum silumbinagāṇ:*

After spending a part of the night with Kṛṣṇa, the gōpikas disperse with an understanding that they will reassemble before daybreak. The elders have decreed that they should perform this particular rite, with Kṛṣṇa as their guide, in order that the drought might disappear. With faith that Kṛṣṇa will provide all the things required for the rite, the gōpikas prepare to meet at daybreak and march to Kṛṣṇa's abode. In the ecstasy caused by their elders' consent for their meeting Kṛṣṇa, they fail to muster sleep the whole night. They manage to spend the night somehow; and as dawn approaches, they launch upon the rite, as previously programmed, and start for Kṛṣṇa's abode. Ten among the gōpikas fail to turn up at the appointed time; and the party marches to their houses in succession and rouses them one after another. Let us examine the significance implied in only ten gōpikas going to sleep and requiring to be awakened.

In all the temples consecrated to the worship of Viṣṇu, in addition to the main Deity's icon, images of the ten Āḷwārs are installed. According to Vaiṣṇavite tradition (sāṃpradaya), worship cannot be offered to the main Deity unless these Āḷwārs are also present. God's worship should be carried on only through His saints. One should worship only the image that one's ancestors have worshipped and in the same spirit and through their mediation. Nowhere is it laid down that the moment one renounces the world, one should make a direct approach to God. Any such direct attempt for God-experience leads either to failure or to a fall. Only that experience of God that is obtained through a preceptor can become fruitful. On this principle is based the custom of making the Pradakṣiṇa or circumambulation of the temple, in the course of which homage is rendered to the ten Āḷwārs and to the Flagstaff and to the Divine Consort before entering the *sanctum sanctorum* for the worship of the main Deity. The Āḷwārs (saints) are rich in spiritual knowledge and experience obtained through God's grace; and when they cast their merciful looks on us, we acquire fitness for spiritual experience. The saints are ten (though their number has increased to twelve by the addition of two more later); and those ten only are principally glorified. What is implied in the rousing of the ten gōpikas from sleep is the reverence paid to the Āḷwārs so as to have their gracious looks turned on us.

Control of the senses and of the mind is a pre-requisite for the service of saints. Close association with devout souls serves as a corrective to the propensities of the senses, both external and internal. Until the activities of these ten senses are oriented towards God, the mind does not earn fitness to attain God. By their association with a number of devout souls, the gōpikas have gained control over senses, external and internal; and what is implied in their rousing the ten gōpikas is this conquest of karmēndriyas and jñānēndriyas.

A knowledge of the three phenomena—God (Īśvara), the individual-self (Jīva), and Primal Nature (Prakṛti)—is essential for the attainment of God. Of these, Jīva and Prakṛti do not exist by themselves; in fact, they cannot exist separately from God. When they are merged in God, they cannot be distinguished from Him as they have neither form nor name. When they are released from Him, God permeates them but remains under a veil, thus

making them appear distinct from Him, giving them name and form. One who has attained to this knowledge understands that the phenomenon of God alone is primary and the other two secondary; and consequently he deems himself as belonging to God. This knowledge of Tattva, which has to be acquired, is indicated by the figure ten (10). The world of Prakṛti contains eight categories—the Panchabhūtas, the five primary elements, aham, the ego, buddhi, the intellect and avyakta, the unmanifest. When we add the individual-self (Jīva) and the Supreme self (Paramātmā) to the eight categories of Prakṛti, we get the total 'ten.' When the figures 1 to 9 stand by themselves separately, they present different forms and possess different values. When to these nine, one is added, the one remains and a zero takes the place of nine. This zero indicates the previous figure 9, but it does not have the form or the name of 9. When joined to 1 which stands for the Supreme Being, all the 9,—the 8 phases of Prakṛti together with Jīva, the ninth—though standing beside it appear to be non-existent. Zero by itself has no value, but when placed beside 1, it acquires value. In a similar way, it is only when the Jīva and Prakṛti stand beside the Supreme Being that they acquire existence; otherwise, they have no existence. To have this integrated knowledge of the three phenomena is the principal means to obtain salvation and to attain God. In fixing upon 10 as the number to be awakened, the suggestion implied is that to attain to this integrated knowledge, it is necessary to adore saints, whose attainments in such knowledge are of a high order.

As the gōpikas reach the house of the first among the ten whom they intend to awaken, they call her out as 'O child,' 'Piḷḷāy.' In this address lies the suggestion that she is a scholar, ripe in the lore of the spirit. The Upaniṣads declare that one who has attained knowledge of God should remain a child. "Pāṇḍityam nirvidya bālyēna tiṣṭhāsēt." It means that a Brahman-jñāni has the uprightness (ārjavam) of the child; or it may mean that this childhood of his is the condition of assimilating and wearing all scriptural knowledge lightly as a garment; or it may mean that, like the child, he takes no care to protect himself. This is what is known as complete self-surrender into God's hands. This particular gōpika has spiritual experience and has surrendered herself unto God; but unlike the adept, she is unaware that bliss

lies not in isolation but in sharing that experience with kindred souls. She feels that her experience is her own; she fears that she may lose it in case she shares it with others. This attitude smacks of childhood of spiritual experience. Devotion to God is to be enjoyed in company. While describing to Arjuna the manner in which devotees enjoy spiritual experience, Kṛṣṇa uses the plural number: "Parasparam bōdhayantaḥ, kirtayantaḥ, namasyantaḥ." The devotees will have no satisfaction, unless they share their experiences with others and enjoy them together in company. In addressing their friend as 'child,' 'Piḷḷāy,' the gōpikas refer to her ignorance of the relish of shared experience.

The gōpikas waiting outside ask her why she has not bestirred herself, although they have all come and the day is about to break. The friend enquires how they are able to distinguish between night and dawn, when they have kept vigil the whole night; and since they have not gone to sleep at all, there is no question of waking up from it. There is a secret involved in this reply, known only to the gōpikas of Nandavraja. The young maidens of that village do not sleep during nights. Out of deference to elders, Kṛṣṇa moves out during daytime into the woods tending cattle; and the maidens attend to their usual chores in their homes. But during nights, Kṛṣṇa sneaks away unseen from his home, calls at the houses of the young women in the code mutually evolved, and enjoys their company. That is why the gōpikas have no sleep during nights. Those who enjoy Lord Kṛṣṇa during daytime are those residing in the woods—the sages who follow the path of knowledge. Those who enjoy him during nights, bathed in cool refreshing moonlight, and unknown to others, are those who adopt the path of devotion. Knowing fully well how fondly her companions love Kṛṣṇa, the gōpika from within the house asserts that there is no question of their waking, as they have not slept at all. Then the callers answer her thus: "The birds are astir. Have you not heard their flutter and chatter? Is this not a sign of daybreak? Are not the birds the harbingers of day? From their preparations to leave their nests in search of food, we have inferred that the dawn has approached." But the maiden in the house is not satisfied with this reply. She counters: "The birds in our village, too, go without sleep at night. How can they manage to sleep when you indulge in high merriment in Kṛṣṇa's company? You do not

allow them a wink of sleep; and so they keep awake making noise all through the night. So their chattering cannot be a sign of daybreak." The gōpikas are thus obliged to show another sign to indicate the approach of day.

Let us understand what, in spiritual parlance, the birds stand for. The birds are the great saints. God-experience (Bhagavad-anubhava) and renunciation, (Vairāgya) Or knowledge (Jñāna) and practice (Ācharaṇa), are their wings. That a state of fitness is reached to attain spiritual experience is known when our ears get attuned to the words of the wise. These sages have sedulously cultivated the Vēdic lore and mastered it. In addition, they abide in God, ever practising His presence. Such sages alone can move freely in the Supreme on their wings of divine knowledge and its practice (ācharaṇa), as birds do on their wings in the sky; and the words they speak take the form of "Adhyayana" and "Upadēśa," practice and instruction. They alone are capable of purveying knowledge. Those who have possessed knowledge and visioned and experienced God, alone are capable of being preceptors. "Upadēkṣyanti tē jñānam jñāninaḥ tattwadārṣinaḥ". Those who have mere knowledge of the scriptures are like those who have eyes but are lame. Those who have mere God-experience are like those who can move about but are blind. It is no use clinging to either. We should seek the favour of those who combine both knowledge and experience. They alone are the preceptors, symbolised here by birds. The birds know that the dawn is approaching; they wake up and then awaken others with their twitter. In a similar way, the great sages, having themselves enjoyed spiritual ecstasy awaken us into a similar experience by their words, which indicate to us that the time for spiritual endeavour is just approaching. Such birds as these figure in the Upaniṣads as well as in the Rāmāyaṇa. In Brahma-Sūtras, in aphorisms like "Śugasya tadanādara śravaṇāt" a reference is made to an episode in the Upaniṣads. There is a king by name Jānaśruti. An upright king, he is also munificent in his gifts both of food and money, Yet, he is devoid of all taste of spiritual knowledge. Two saints wandering in the sky in the shape of swans happen to fly over his mansion; and they take occasion to comment on this regretful lapse of the king. Seeing the king in his bed, one of the swans suggests to the other that it

is not proper to fly over him, and that they may make a detour avoiding him. The other swan replies that the king is no Raikwa to be afraid of. The king hears these words. He is eager to know who Raikwa is; and so sends his scouts all over the country in search of him. Raikwa is a great sage; he has renounced all; and is without even a smack of worldliness about him. One of the scouts discovers him as he lies scratching his body under a cart in a forest. He reports to the king, whereupon the king hastens to the spot, offers all that he has to him as tribute and obtains from him knowledge of Brahma. In this episode, we notice how it is the swans that provide the incentive to Jānaśruti to seek spiritual knowledge. It is they that tell him that the night is past; and the time has come to obtain initiation into the lore of the spirit.

There are several episodes in the Rāmāyaṇa which deal with birds. All of them are concerned with giving proper guidance to a right understanding of the true nature of self. It is only the great saints that intervene with God on behalf of the aspiring souls and commend them for His protection. That is why it is enjoined that the approach to God should be made through them. This esoteric principle is enunciated in the Rāmāyaṇa. Thinking of the sad plight of his mother, Śrī Rāma observes to Lakṣmaṇa in sorrow that the domestic pet myna has greater love for his mother Kausalya than he has. ("Manyē prīti viśiṣṭhā sā mattō Lakṣmaṇa śārikā.") In Kausalya's mansion there are two pet birds, a parrot and a myna; and both of them converse in an amiable way. On one occasion, when Kausalya is away, a cat steals into the sanctuary and attempts to eat the dish kept ready for consecration. The myna, noticing this, urges the parrot to bite the enemy's foot. ("Śuka! pāda marēḥ daśa.") Rāma bewails that he has not been able to render to his mother even that much of help as the myna has done. Here the parrot represents the Bhagavatattwa and the myna the Āchāryatattwa. The myna is feminine, that is, she is wholly dependent on God; and has no existence of her own. The dish that is kept ready for consecration stands for the Ātmatattwa. Illusion (Māya), like the cat, hovers for an opportunity to snatch away the self (jīva). Then, like the myna, the preceptor intervenes and petitions to God (parrot) to save the self from being enveloped by Illusion. This is the great help that the Āchārya renders.

In this way are the birds presented in scriptures as great sages and saints and preceptors, whose words provide incentives to spiritual endeavour and protection in times of crisis. It is for this reason that the gōpikas refer to the birds and their twitter, while awakening their comrade from sleep: "Awake! haven't you heard the chirping of the birds?"

2. "Puḷḷaraiyan kōyilil vellai viḷiṣaṅgin pēraravamkēṭṭilaiyō."

"Haven't you heard even the booming sound of the white conch, blown to invite all to the temple of Śrī Mahā Viṣṇu, the Lord of Garuḍa, the king of birds?"

When the still-resting gōpika refuses to accept the noise of birds as a sign of daybreak, the maidens refer to another sign, the sound of the conch. Garuḍa is the king of all birds; and he is the vehicle carrying the Lord. It is from the Lord's temple that the conch is blown, indicating that it is time for worship; and that all should turn up for service. "Has not the day dawned for you even when the sound booms so loud"? A doubt may arise about the existence of a temple for Viṣṇu in Nandavraja, on the ground that during that period of incarnation of Kṛṣṇa, there could not have existed any god different from Kṛṣṇa. But we learn that in Trētāyuga, during Śrī Rāmā's incarnation, there were temples; and Śrī Rāmā himself worshipped the Deities in them. On the day of coronation, it was said that Śrī Rāmā together with Sita worshipped Śrīmannārāyaṇa: "Saha patnyā viśālākṣyā Nārāyaṇa mupāgamat." That Śrī Ranganātha had been Śrī-Rāmā's family Deity, adored for generations before him, was established in the Rāmāyaṇa. In a similar way, during Śrī Kṛṣṇa's incarnation, too, some forms of Deities must have been worshipped in temples.

Let us understand the significance of referring to God as the Lord of Garuḍa who is the king of birds. We have seen that the birds are the great sages; and the sages are governed by the Vēda. Thus Vēda is Garuḍa, the king of birds; "Vēdātmā Vihagēśwaraḥ," "Tārksyaḥ śrutinām nidhiḥ." The Lord commands the Vēda. The temple is the place which illumines the Phenomenon that is propounded by the Vēdas. When we enter a temple, we go round it and make obeisance at the Flagstaff on which Garuḍa

figures. This implies that we accept the authority of the Vēdas. The conch which goes on blowing in the temple is the Praṇava. Praṇava takes the form of a conch; and its dominant feature is sound. And this sound exhorts us that we should render worship to God.

Praṇava is comprised of three letters "A, U, M (Akāra Ukāra Makāra)." Makāra, the individual self, belongs only to Akāra, the Supreme Self; that is what Praṇava propounds. The Ukāra in it clarifies that it is wrong to think that we belong to the Supreme Soul and also to others; rather we should consider ourselves as *wholly* belonging to Him and to *none else*. The sundering of our relationship with all others (other than the Supreme) is indicated by the whiteness of the conch. And the blowing of that white conch is the invitation to all the individual-souls to dedicate all their activities to the Supreme Self.

"Get up! Haven't you heard the booming sound of the conch?" Not content with calling it mere sound of the conch, they call it the loud booming sound. There is a subtle distinction between the two. Those who have heard the mere sound of the conch admit that they belong to the Supreme and that they are to render service unto Him. But it is only when they happen to hear its loud booming sound, do they come to acquire knowledge that they are to render service to the devotees of the Supreme as well. The particular gōpika whom her comrades are waking up has, in her deep self-consciousness, accepted that she is the possession of God and that she is entirely dependent upon Him. But this is not enough. She must also realise that she belongs to the saints in an equal measure and is dependent on them, too. Then alone it can be deemed that she has heard in full the booming sound of the conch.

The daybreak is announced by the twitter of the birds and the sound of the conch.

3. *Pillāy eḷundirāy!*

"O child! arise." On this summons, the maid enquires how they happen to rise earlier and who has awakened them. In reply, they inform her that the sound of "Hari," (the name

repeatedly uttered by the munis and yōgis, as they leave their beds and rise quietly), has slowly entered their ears; and penetrating into their hearts has refreshed them and awakened them. The yōgis meditate on the attributes of God; and the gōpikas choose three out of them for special mention here:—

4. "*Pēy mulai naṭṭuṇḍu*" Having sucked the poison from
Pūtana's breasts;
5. "*Kaḷḷaccagaḍam
kolakkaḷiyak
kāḷoCCI*" Having shattered with a kick of his
out-stretched leg the joints and the
axles of the false cart into
smithereens;
6. "*Vellattaravil tuyil
amarnda vittinai*" The Primal Cause resting on the
snake-bed in the Sea of Milk;
7. "*Uḷḷattukkondū*" Having enshrined such Primal
Cause in their hearts;
8. "*Munivargaḷum yōgt
gaḷum meḷḷa veḷundu*" the munis and yōgis rise slowly;
9. "*artenṇa pēraravam
uḷḷam pugundu kuḷirndu
ēḷōrempāvāy*" repeating the name of Hari over
and over again;

and the loud sound thus produced has penetrated into us and cooled our hearts.

The young woman resting within the house has perfect love for God. She enjoys all that by herself. She is not aware that she should enjoy that love in the company of others. Until that girl who has perfect love for Kṛṣṇa joins them, the other gōpikas find no satisfaction. To draw her out, they refer to the dangers that confront Kṛṣṇa. They hope that, unable to endure the thought of Kṛṣṇa facing troubles, she will, of her own accord, come out and join them in pronouncing benediction on him.

They relate the anecdote of Pūtana suckling the child Kṛṣṇa. Pūtana assumes the form of mother and suckles Kṛṣṇa; and he fondly drinks the milk. Others fear that it is poison; but to the Supreme it is no poison but an article of diet, fit to be consumed with relish. Pūtana has attained the same abode that those who offer what they have to God with love, reach. When we offer

anything to God, He accepts it and gives us protection, although our offer lacks purity of motive and although our exhibition of love for Him is a mere outward pretence. When Pūtana suckles Kṛṣṇa, she pretends to have as much love for him as Yaśōda has when the latter suckles him. To the Supreme, this *show* of love is enough.

It may here be recalled how Śrī Rāma reacts to the situation when Vibhīṣaṇa seeks his succour. When doubts about Vibhīṣaṇa's sincerity in seeking friendship are entertained and expressed by others, Śrī Rāma declares that, even if Vibhīṣaṇa is only pretending friendship outwardly without genuine feeling, he is disinclined to reject him. ("Mitrabhāvēna samprāptam natyajēyam kadhamchana.") In a similar way, Lord Kṛṣṇa, seeing that Pūtana has come assuming his mother's form, gets ready to suck her breasts, and even gladly consumes poison. To the Supreme Lord, all things are the same. He accepts even poison as nectar. Strange! Pūtana who has attempted to kill with poison Kṛṣṇa, who is the embodiment of immortality, herself attains immortality. Pūtana seems to exhort us: "Make all your offers only to the Supreme Being, whatever the motives urging them. He accepts them and gives you immortality." Pūtana is no other than Prakṛti. Prakṛti looks like the mother; but she is not the real mother. We believe that we cannot be nourished and sustained without Prakṛti, which provides the objects of enjoyment (bhōgya), the agencies which secure them (bhōgōpakaraṇas) and the places suitable for their enjoyment (bhōgasthānās). The real mother is not Pūtana but Yaśōda. Yaśōda is the incantation; and Mantra sustains the soul. Close association with God and entire dependence on Him are her two breasts. With them she suckles and nourishes us. Pūtana is Prakṛti. Her breasts are ahamkāra (ego) and mamakāra (possessiveness); through them she feeds us with the poison (viṣa) of sense-pleasures (viṣayabhōgas); and thus attempts to kill us, and not to sustain us. The only difference between 'Viṣaya' and 'Viṣa' is the letter 'Ya.' Poison kills the man who drinks it. Sense-objects destroy those who but *think* of them. If we drink the milk of sense-objects with the thought that *we* are drinking it and for *our own* sake, the milk turns into poison and harms us. On the other hand, if we offer that milk to the child Kṛṣṇa who lies ensconced in our hearts and think

that he is consuming it, Kṛṣṇa himself drinks it and thus sees that Prakṛti does not touch us. In fact, he destroys Prakṛti and gives us protection. The anecdote of Pūtana reveals this esoteric doctrine. By our association with Prakṛti, we develop ego and possessiveness through the poison generated by our taste for sense-pleasures. If we offer this poison (taste for sense-pleasures) to Kṛṣṇa, we are not only saved of danger but we receive good, in addition. The munis and yōgis, who contemplate on Lord Kṛṣṇa, pray to Him at dawn as soon as they get up, "O Hari! release us from the bonds of Avidya (Nescience)."

The yōgis think, next, of the Demon of False Cart (Śakaṭāsura) and how Kṛṣṇa has kicked him out of joint. In the absence of the mother, Pūtana has come in her form and tried to kill Kṛṣṇa by suckling him. But here Yaśōda herself lays the child under the cart, thinking that it provides a shield from danger, while she goes to Yamuna to fetch water. By the time she returns she finds that the very cart, which she has deemed would give protection, turns demoniac and gets ready to kill the child. Kṛṣṇa begins crying as his mother has not returned by feed-time; and as he moves his limbs while crying, his leg stretches out and strikes the cart. With that impact, the cart collapses as its axle is broken. Kṛṣṇa makes no effort to kill. The foot that is stretched out in the pangs of hunger, itself protects him from the Demon who imbues the cart. The gōpikas congratulate themselves on their good fortune. It is Kṛṣṇa's foot that has saved him from danger, while lying down in infancy under the Demon cart. That same foot is the saviour to all of them as well.

This cart is the body. That which destroys bliss, the bliss of God-experience, is the Śarīra. "Nahavai saśarīrasya sataḥ priyā priyayō rapahati rasti." While in the body, there is no escape for anyone from joys and sorrows. We can reach the Supreme Being only when we are rid of them. To attain that end, we have to get rid of the body. But we cannot wish it away. It falls only by impact with His foot. The body which is the cart has two wheels, good deeds and bad; and it proceeds forward only with the help of these wheels. But once these wheels of merit and sin collapse on the impact of Lord Kṛṣṇa's foot, the cart of the body moves no further. Having this episode of Śakaṭāsura in mind, let us consecrate all our works at the feet of Śrīmannā-

rāyaṇa. With the touch of His feet, karmas cease to be karmas and bring us good. The munis and yōgis praise 'Hari' as the One who destroys karmas and sunders the bond with the body.

As the yōgis rise from sleep, they glorify the Creator of the universe who lies in "wakeful sleep" (yōganidra) on the snake-bed (śeṣaśayya) in a lonely place on the ocean of milk. This is the place where the Lord of the Heavenly Abode abides, before He descends into this world. Milk represents God's attributes which are eternal and immaculate. The Lord lying on the sea of milk signifies the perfection of His eternal and auspicious attributes, and represents the Primal Cause of Creation (Jagatkāraṇatattva). Wakeful sleep or "yōganidra" means that the Lord-of-All is immersed in thought as to how to protect the creation when there is none in existence. 'Yōga' means 'bringing together'; here it means bringing Jīva (the self) and Prakṛti (Primal Nature) together; and that 'bringing together' is creation. His entertaining the wish (sankalpa) to create is the yōganidra, wakeful sleep. The phenomena of self and Primal Nature lie merged in the Phenomenon of the Primary Cause in such a way that they cannot be separated and shown as distinct entities. This phenomenon of the Primal Cause rests on the ocean of milk before creation, in the same way as the seed rests when soaked in water by the peasant. Unable to be away from his Lord, Śeṣa (the Serpent) becomes His bed, providing Him comfort and joy with his softness and coolness and fragrance. This Snake-bed symbolises the condition as to how the phenomena of self (Jīva) and Primal Nature (Prakṛti), remain the possessions of the Supreme Being both before and after creation. According to the Āgama Śāstras (Scriptures concerned with temples), the Lord that rests on the Milk-sea is the form of Aniruddha in Vyūhatattvas; and this form is the root of all incarnations. To think of this phenomenon is to think of the protector of creation. It is thus that the gōpikas glorify Him and pray: "O Hari! the Primal Cause of the whole creation and its Protector, dissolve all our dangers and free us from peril."

Both the munis and the yōgis are adepts in meditation. They enshrine Bhagavān in their hearts and keep Him there always. Munis are those who engage themselves in unbroken contemplation on the attributes of God. The yōgis are those who abide in rendering, ceaselessly, all types of service to God. Both munis and yōgis

are averse to any other activity. Lakṣmaṇa is karmayōgi. He adores the Lord by remaining always in His presence and rendering every service to Him. Such are the yōgis. Bharata is muni. Though he is far away from the Lord and is unable to render direct service to Him, he spends his time always contemplating on His attributes. Such munis enjoy God-experience, with their minds ever abiding in Him, although they are physically far away from Him.

As in this world, so also in the Heavenly Abode, these two types, yōgis and munis, exist; some rendering physical service and others rendering mental homage. But wherefrom have they moved into Nandavraja? This doubt need not arise. When God Himself incarnates as Kṛṣṇa and suffers untold miseries and sneaks into prohibited places—all for the sake of Pāṇḍavas and gōpikas—there need be no wonder if sages and saints, munis and yōgis, flock to the village and lie in wait in the cowsheds to have a vision of Him, when he brings the cattle home in the evenings. Līlā Śuka has exhorted spiritual aspirants to go to Nandavraja to have a vision of the God-phenomenon which they have failed to find, despite hard search, in Āgamāraṇyas, the tangled woods of Āgamās (Scriptures). There they see the Essence of the Upaniṣadic thought lying fastened to a grinding-stone and crawling in the forecourts of the houses of gōpikas. The yōgis and munis in Nandavraja nestle the Supreme close to their hearts (taking as much care as the pregnant women take of the babies in their wombs), and rise slowly and cautiously at dawn, lest any harm should befall Him. When Prahlāda is flung from a mountain-top, it is said that he has fastened his hands close to his bosom to protect Hari, who lies ensconced there, from getting hurt during the fall. Thus the devout saints, in their mad, excessive love for Him, take all precautions to save Him, forgetting for the nonce that God is the Protector of all, including themselves. Motivated likewise, the munis and yōgis in the village rise slowly, repeating the name of Hari; and as their number is large and as they extend over every

part of the place, their simultaneous repeating of the name of 'Hari' becomes a loud sound spreading far and wide. "That sound has entered our ears," avow the gōpikas, "and made its way into our hearts—hearts dried and seared with the heat generated by separation from the Lord— and like a refreshing shower cooled and softened them. When our hearts are thus relieved of the heat of the agony of separation, a cheering coolness has roused us from sleep; and we are here at your gate to invite you. Arise, and join us."



PĀŚURAM VII

PREFACE.

The subject of God (Bhagavadviṣaya) has a strange flavour, all its own. Those who have tasted spiritual experience for the first time and those who have been familiar with it for some time, alike lose themselves in it. By constant repetition, worldly experiences lose their flavour, become stale, and fail to yield the happiness that they have given in the beginning. Spiritual experience, on the other hand, remains ever fresh and casts its spell. The gōpika that was roused from sleep the previous day was a novice to spiritual experience; and could not hear the sounds coming from outside. The one that is to be awakened this day is quite familiar with God-experience; and being intoxicated with it, keeps lying still, though awake, and is aware of the sounds from outside. The gōpikas are not content with rousing their friend the previous day. Their psychology is such that they cannot endure if even one of their friends is missing from their company. Such is the nature of all who have genuine kinship with God. Those who feel happy when they see all the devotees joining together and sharing spiritual experience, can alone be truly regarded as having been kin to God. To them the absence of even a single devotee is galling. They derive greater happiness from the company and confabulation of devotees familiar with spiritual experiences than from spiritual experience itself. Those who do not entertain love for the company of devotees cannot evince interest in matters spiritual.

A great devotee with a large clientele of disciples, Nanjīyar by name, happens to meet another jīyar or devotee and salutes him. A moment later, Nanjīyar feels laden with grief that he has not as yet developed genuine taste for God. When the disciples enquire why he is grief-stricken, he seems to have replied: "I am no bhakta at all. I shall become a real devotee only when the sight of another devotee gives me greater bliss than that yielded by direct experience of God." Such is the aspiration of the gōpikas too. They crave

for companionship with devotees; and so they rouse kindred spirits without leaving out any one.

The previous day, they referred to three kinds of sounds as signs of approaching dawn. This day also they mention three other sounds signifying dawn. While the enquiry on the previous day was "Haven't you heard the sounds?," the query today is "Having heard the sounds, how is it you are still in bed?" From these, it is clear that the first thing for an aspirant to do is *to hear*; to listen attentively. On both these days the gōpikas seek the favour of those who are adepts in Śravaṇabhakti, devoutness resulting from careful, attentive hearing. The first of these sounds is the unintelligible chirping of the birds; the second, the dominating boom of the conch; the third the repetitive sound of the name of God, 'Hari.'

Mere perception of the sound of God's name, though no enquiry is made into its meaning, is enough to bring about a chastening of our hearts. It may be that they have not deliberately uttered His name with the intention of making us hear it. There may be no meaning in the name, either. Still, it awakens us. The name of God, even when uttered by them without a particular purpose, and in a casual manner out of habit, renders help to us. The birds do not twitter with the intention of rousing us. There is no meaning to their chatter, either. It is their natural chirping; still it helps to awaken us. It is heard only by those in whom the tendency to purity swells up and who are ready to wake up. It is not heard by those who are in sound sleep. 'Hearing the cries of birds' implies the act of our hearing people uttering God's names and attributes or making spiritual discourses. We do this in a casual manner and without being aware of what is passing. This will not give us the belief that it is dawn. Then we hear the boom of the conch, blown deliberately with the intention of inviting us to turn to God. This sound creates a deep stir in us. We need not know its meaning. It is Praṇavam (Ōmkāra). It is enough we have heard it; it is enough we have uttered it; although we have not understood its meaning, it orients our minds to God. To bring the self close to the Supreme Self, we have to meditate on 'Ōm.' Sound (nāda) has a special power of its own. It fills the mind with the tendency to purity (sattwaguṇa) and turns it inward. That is the reason why blowing the conch has become

usual routine in a temple. Then comes the sound caused by the repeated utterance of 'Hari' by Ṛṣis and Yōgis, as they wake up from sleep. They do this for the happiness it gives them. It is not like the gibberish of the birds; nor is it like the booming sound of the conch. It takes shape as a sequence of letters and has a meaning on which they contemplate. When it falls on our ears, it not only augurs the advent of day; it provides us relief from long-endured agony. Our capacity to hear these sounds indicates that the time has come for our attainment of God. The idea of Nihilism, that "there is nothing at all," which has struck deep roots in our minds, now gradually yields place to the idea that "there is something after all." By practising hearing, "It is not" (Nāsti) disappears; and "It is" (asti) takes its place. In the beginning, we may not reflect over the meaning of the sounds we hear; but we must hear them while they are uttered by people in the course of their daily lives—first, names of God or His attributes; then, Praṇavam (Ōmkāra) which essentially connotes God; and then the names uttered by devotees out of the depths of their experiences. Then we shall discover that the day has broken.

People offer their salutations to the preceptors; and invoke the name of God before they begin the recitation of the Vēdas: "Śrī Gurubhyō namaḥ, Hariḥ Om!" Similarly, before beginning the ritual, the gōpikas refer to the twitter of the birds, the sound of the conch and the utterance of God's name 'Hari.' The birds represent the preceptors; the gōpikas may be deemed to have saluted them (Śrī Gurubhyō namaḥ). The conch represents Ōmkāra, the name of Hari. The gōpikas may be deemed to have invoked the name of Hari (Hariḥ Ōm). Having begun the rite, they expound today another diversification (Vaividhya) in the way of hearing (Śravaṇa).

*Kiṣu Kiṣeṇṇēṅgu mānaiccāṭṭa ṅkalandu
pēṣina pēccaravam keṭṭilaiyō pēy ppenṇe
Kāṣum piṇappum Kalakalappa kkal pērtu
Vaṣanaṇṇikuḷalāy cciyar; mattināl
Ōṣalppaḍutta itayiraravam keṭṭilaiyō
nāyakappenpillāy ! nārāyaṇan mūrti
Keṣavanai ppāḍavum nī keṭṭekiḍattiyō
teṣamuḍaiyāy! tīraṇēṭṭēmpāvāy.*

Summary.

"Knowing that they have to remain separated all through the day, the bharadvāja birds assemble at dawn from all sides and confer in groups. Haven't you heard even the sound of their words? O mad girl! As the gōpikas are engaged in churning curds, the bands of their hair-do's get loosened and the flowing hair, decked with flowers, fills the air with fragrance; the movement of their hands makes their bracelets tingle; and this sound, merging with the other sounds made by the ornaments worn around their necks, mounts up to the sky. Haven't you heard that surging, banging sound? O Leader! How is it you could lie still, even after you have heard the voices of praise bestowed on the Lord who, though pervading all objects out of love, has chosen to incarnate in the form of Kṛṣṇa on purpose to be seen by us, and has destroyed our enemies like Kēśi? We see your radiance. Open the door, allow us to enjoy it without any obstacle whatsoever."

Commentary.

1. *Kūṣu kīṣenreṅgum ānaiccāttāṅ kalandu*
pēṣina pēccaravam kēṭtilaiyō

The bharadvāja birds converse among themselves and their shrill voices herald the break of day; and therefore it is time for the gōpika within to rise from her bed. And her friends desire her to get up. But that gōpika does not consider that noise to be a signal of the dawn; and so keeps herself in bed. The words the birds exchange among themselves at dawn are not empty, meaningless words; these words must keep them lively and serve as sustenance during the period of their separation till dusk; they must serve to remove all anxiety and give them happiness during day; and hence they carefully carry those words with them, in the same way as pilgrims carry lunch-baskets on their journeys. Their words, couched in their own dialect, are unintelligible. But they are as worthy of attention as the words "Hari, Hari" uttered by yogis and munis. There is a good deal of esoteric meaning involved here. Orthodox learned Brāhmins (Śrōtriyas) recite the Vedas early in the morning and teach their disciples to recite them

It is not profitable if they practise recitation for themselves. They must also teach others what they know. Systematic practice (swādhyāya) and regular teaching (Pravachana)—both are important. The Śrōtriyas are the bharadwāja birds mentioned here. Ṛṣi Bharadwāja has lived for three hundred years with the purpose of making a thorough study of the three Vēdas; but he is unable to grasp much of them. Those who have spent their entire lives in reciting the Vēdas are the bharadwāja birds; they have not merely recited them; they have understood their meaning to some extent and put it into practice in their lives. Knowledge and its application to life are like the two wings of the birds; and they help them to roam about in the Supreme Spirit. For these sages, that period is sleep in which they become unaware of worldly affairs and get completely engrossed in spiritual experience. From such sleep they wake up at dawn. We, too, go to sleep; but our sleep is rest from worldly pursuits; we too wake up at dawn, only to address ourselves to the day's activities. The sages, on the other hand, emerge from their spiritual experience, only to review it with kindred souls. Thus do the sages pool together their spiritual experiences and after review settle their authenticity; and then only disclose the secrets of spiritual life to others.

The words with which they confer with one another, before they separate for the day, relate to the subject of God. After going through spiritual experiences, each by himself in the loneliness of the night, they share them publicly with other kindred sages; and then promulgate them to the world outside in the form of Upaniṣads. This sound is heard all over the world—heard by those who wish to hear. And to those who are a little wakeful, it indicates the break of day. The subject of God is night to us; we are averse to it; and hence it is to us as dark as night. To say that this darkness passes and the dawn arrives, is to indicate a change in us. With the advent of dawn, there is an upsurge of the sattwagūṇa (tendency to purity); and our aversion to spiritual matters subsides; and the hope that our minds orient towards them arises. When the sound of the discussion of spiritual issues by sages reaches our ears, we become aware that the dawn has arrived. Daytime is suited to activity as night to contemplation. The bharadwāja birds confer among themselves before they start in search of food. In the same way, the sages recall to their minds their own experiences and the precepts of others who are advanced in spiritual matters.

They carry this knowledge with them as they enter upon worldly pursuits; and applying it, consecrate their works as services to God. Lovers, when separated from each other, try to mitigate their suffering by recalling to mind the pleasant conversations in which they have indulged when united. Likewise, even when they are occupied with mundane affairs, the sages feel the presence of God and are never separated from Him. Whatever works they perform, they do as God's servants and with God's grace. The gōpikas seem to ask their friend: "Haven't you heard the sound of mutual consultation of such ardent devotees as these before they have parted company?"

In the previous Pāṣuram, the birds are said to have made a clamorous noise; that is what they do as they wake up. In this Pāṣuram, the birds confer among themselves. Here are voices and words. The gōpikas enquire if the sleeping girl has understood the meaning behind the words. What is to be understood is not the words but the 'dhwani' behind them, that is, the suggestion implied in them. "How extremely hard it is for God's devotees to live separate from each other! As a devotee, should you not have felt the agony of your isolation from us? Is it not strange that the idea has not struck you so far to join us?"

2. *Pēyppenṇē*: "Mad Girl"

The gōpikas heckle her as a 'mad girl'. It is foolishness on her part to think that enjoying God is all-important; to have enjoyed Him by herself in isolation and not in company with other devotees, is sheer madness. That is, she does not know how to enjoy Him. The gōpika of the previous Pāṣuram, being a neophyte, withholds herself, out of modesty, from the company of others; and hence she is addressed as a 'child' (Piḷḷāy). In this Pāṣuram, The gōpika is addressed as a 'woman' (peṇ). She is come of age in spiritual experience; but she is 'mad', in as much as she does not know how to enjoy it. Spiritual experience should be shared with others in company. That is wisdom. She lacks that *vivēka*; and therefore she is 'mad' (stubbornly unwise). To this charge, the gōpika replies; "When Śrī Rāma has spent his exile in the woods, he and Sita go on conferring in whispers all through the night, not knowing that the dawn has arrived. The

birds too have been engaged in conversation all the night till it has worn out. How then can their noise be taken as a symbol of day-break?" Thus saying, the gōpika refutes the charge, and ascribes to her friends the 'madness' of which she is accused. Then the gōpikas mention another sign of dawn.

3. *Kāsum pīrappum kalakalappakkai pērtu*
Vāsanarūṅkuḷa lāycciyar mattināl
Oṣaippaḍuttat tayiraravam kēṭṭilaiyo

"Haven't you heard the sound of the churning of curds, as the gōpikas handle the stirring instrument, moving their out-stretched hands in such a way as to make the gold discs suspended around their necks to clash and tingle, and to release the fragrant flowers adorning their hair?"

In Vrēpalle, churning curds is a daily chore for the gōpikas. Those who do this are women, married women. They wake up early before daybreak, dress their hair and deck it with flowers; and then turn to churning curds while, at the same time, they sing the praises of Kṛṣṇa. The pots are full with thickly-condensed curds. Unless they use all their strength and strive hard, the stirring instrument cannot break the hard crust and penetrate into the curds. Owing to the strenuous bodily movement involved in this exercise, their hair-bands slacken and the flowers, released from hair, fall and spread their fragrance all over. The sound of the churning fills the whole village and spreads over the sky. "Have you not heard it?"

After Kṛṣṇa's birth, the milk produced in the village has increased thousandfold; and it has become a hard task for the women-folk to churn the curds. Knowing, as they do, that Kṛṣṇa is very fond of butter, they are ready to undergo the strain out of love for him. But as they are of delicate constitution and as they are far away from Kṛṣṇa and as the curds are hard and thick-crust, they get easily exhausted. Churning curds is a daily chore for them. They cannot avoid it. Likewise, even the greatest devotees cannot, in any circumstances, relinquish the prescribed daily tasks. They have to perform them, keeping God in their minds and consecrating their performance to Him. In the Bhagavadgīta, Lord Kṛṣṇa exhorts the devotees, who have overcome attachment to

things, to perform the daily chores with no less enthusiasm than those who have no experience of God show in their performance. If they relinquish these duties, people who have no spiritual experiences also follow their example, and they come to grief. Following this principle, the gōpikas go through their routine duties even though they are perfect in their love for Kṛṣṇa and devotion to him. Calling them 'gōpikas' itself underlines that they have not earned their knowledge by their own efforts. Their love for Kṛṣṇa is not the result of their cultivating it; they are instinct with it; the mere fact that Kṛṣṇa has incarnated in their midst accounts for it. So it is that they naturally feel that they belong to him and live as his dependants, consecrating all their activities—physical, vocal and mental—to him. They sing of him as they churn. As they manipulate the stirring instrument, they swing from side to side; and the ornaments on their bosoms produce a tingling sound. Thus three sounds emanate during this churning process; the sound of churning, the sound of the hymn of praise and the sound of the clash of ornaments. They do not suspend reciting Kṛṣṇa's name, whatever be the work they are engaged in. Finding her daughter-in-law ever engrossed in devotion to Kṛṣṇa, one woman has thought of curing her of this madness by entrusting her with the sale of milk and curds in the village. Though the gōpika goes out into the streets on this purpose, she is unable to withdraw her mind from its pre-occupation with Kṛṣṇa. So, instead of hawking "milk and curds" she utters words like "Gōvinda," "Damōdara" and "Mādhava." Such is the self-forgetfulness of gōpikas and their feeling of at-one-ness with Kṛṣṇa, that they will be engrossed in singing about him even while occupied with daily chores like churning of curds. Kṛṣṇa delights in standing before them, unseen in the shade of the lamp. He holds the stirring instrument tight, thus making the task of turning it more arduous. When they get exhausted with the work, their bodies drenched in sweat and their hair in disarray, Kṛṣṇa shows pity, takes over the instruments from their hands, and completes the churning in a trice. He gives them satisfaction and happiness by eating a part of the butter thus thrown up. The story of the churning of the curds is as significant as that of the churning of the sea of milk for nectar. So the gōpikas enquire: "Haven't you heard that sound?"

The churning of curds is similar to the churning of the sea of-milk, undertaken by Dēvas (celestials) and Asuras (demons) to secure nectar. The sea is God Himself. The milk in it represents God's nature, form, attributes and splendour. Churning is the process of constant meditation on them. The stirring instrument, the mount of Mandara, is the intellect, which concentrates on God with tenacious determination. In this act of churning, both the divine and the demoniac powers take part and cooperate. But finally the divine powers obtain victory by God's grace and get immortality, while the demoniac powers perish.

'Gōḥ '(cows) mean ' words,' that is, the Vēdas; and their milk represents the nature, form, attributes and splendour of God. Learning them from a preceptor and assimilating them till they strike root or get fixed in the mind, is signified by the curds. Love of God is the cord with which we fasten knowledge about God, which is the stirring instrument, and begin to churn the curds of spiritual experiences; and then we reach a state of mind in which we think of consecrating all the activities of body, tongue and mind to God alone. This mental state is the resultant ' butter ' of this spiritual process. This butter melts on the impact of even a little of the heat, caused by separation from the Lord. So it sticks to Him. This state is the Parama Puruṣārtha, the highest end to be pursued and attained. It is this butter, amṛtattwa, which the Lord is fond of.

When the sea of milk was churned, three types of sounds rose out of it. One of them was the sound made by rivers, as they reversed their courses away from the sea which rose to a higher level consequent on the depositing of Mandara in it. The second sound was that produced by the friction between the mountain Mandara and the body of the serpent Vāsuki, which was fastened round it to manipulate its churning movement. The third sound was that produced by the swell (rise and fall) of the sea, as the mountain turned during the churning operation. When the gōpikas churn the curds, three sounds emerge—the sound of their song, the sound of their clashing ornaments as they move, and the sound of churning.

Worldly desires and latent tendencies connected with them (Vāsanās) flow into us from the sense-objects. When we keep

our minds steady on God alone, the rivers of desires and their tendencies concerning sense-objects cannot flow into us and so turn back. This is the first sound. Śraddha or Faith, which is inherent in us, is the Vāsuki with which we fasten the Mandara, our tenacious determination to attain God; and when the two ends of Vāsuki are pulled this side and that by the divine and demoniac powers in us, the second sound emanates. The third sound is produced by the swell of God's nature, form, attributes and splendour in our minds, when we constantly contemplate on them. Thus, the whole process of churning is nothing but the continuous effort we make to attain the highest end of complete self-dedication through hearing (śravaṇa) meditation (manana) and self-forgetting contemplation (nidhidhyāsana). "Do you not know this much?"—the gōpikas seem to ask their friend.

The gōpa women, engaged in the churning operation, wear two gold discs as auspicious ornaments (Kāsu, pirappu). Even when they are occupied with routine chores, they constantly revolve in their minds the three incantations (mantras) which have conferred on them knowledge about their true nature (swarūpa), the highest end that they should pursue (puruṣārtha) and the greatest good (hitam) that they should ever keep in mind. "I belong only to God, and am not meant to belong to others. His feet are my refuge. My duty lies in rendering all kinds of services to Him alone. If I discharge my duties without entertaining the slightest idea that I am doing them and for my own sake and with the courageous conviction that He will help me, He will surely protect me from all bondage"—This is the spirit that animates them. External ornaments add beauty to the body. But knowing the nature of self and understanding that He alone is the means, and consecrating all activities to His service, prove to be the ornaments of the soul. These are the ornaments that the gōpikas wear. These are the secrets conveyed to us by mantras or incantations. They are called 'Mantras' because they give us protection, when we constantly repeat them and meditate on them (manana); and that is why they are to adorn our hearts. The auspicious gold discs are fastened around the neck of the woman by her husband at the time of wedding. With this rite, a definite change comes over her in her position. She loses her close affinity with her parents; she belongs to her husband's gōtra

and becomes a member of his family. To keep this ornament secure, it is fastened with a thread around the wife's neck. This thread is called 'Mangala Sūtram'. Let us consider how this kinship applies to the self and the Supreme. This thread is called 'auspicious' as it forges a sacred link with God for the self. The thread is fastened over the neck in three knots; this indicates the intimate and everlasting relationship between God and the individual-soul. The three knots suggest the three types of relationship that should last between the individual-soul and God: (1) that we belong to Him alone and to none else (*ananya śeṣatwa*) (2) that we deserve to be enjoyed by Him alone, and by none else (*ananya bhōgyatwa*) and (3) that we seek refuge in Him alone and in none else (*ananya śaraṇatwa*). With the acquisition of this knowledge, our relations with Prakṛti, the mother who has given us this birth, and other products of Prakṛti are sundered; and new affinities are formed with God and His devotees. Wearing such ornaments as these, the gōpikas never forget their relationship with God while performing the prescribed duties; in fact, they lose themselves in singing His praises. To the gōpikas, churning the curds is a sacrificial rite (*yajña*); it is their meditation (*dhyāna*); it is their penance (*tapas*). It is an activity that they take to with avidity. Because it enables them to collect butter which Kṛṣṇa likes immensely. Therefore, they do not touch the pots of curds, until they cleanse themselves and dress their hair and decorate it with flowers and beautify their faces with *tilak*. Woman takes special care in nourishing and decorating her tresses of hair, even because she knows that luscious and lustrous hair contributes to her beauty and adds to her attractiveness to man.

Shining locks of hair make woman beautiful. Devotion to God, likewise, brings beauty to the soul. Whatever in us makes the Supreme Person (*Parama Puruṣa*) turn His mind steadily on us, and keeps Him irremovably riveted to us, is what constitutes our beauty. Devotion is nothing else than the love we evince for God. Pleased with it, the Supreme yields Himself to us and loves us. We believe, in the beginning, that this devotion will be useful to us; but later, even though we find that this is of no consequence, we cling to the object of our love. This is what is called infatuation (*mōha*). In worldly pursuits, this infatuation deludes and binds us. But loving God without expecting any return is no delusion; it brings

about salvation. It is this selfless love of gōpikas that is implied in the reference to their attractive tresses of hair. This fondness is not caused by the excitement of the senses (Indriyaprakōpa) on seeing the fascinating features of Kṛṣṇa's person. Rather, it is caused by the integrated knowledge of their own nature, of his nature and of the close affinity between the two. This knowledge is symbolised by the flowers; and devotion integrated with such knowledge constitutes their fondness; and this is represented by their having locks of hair decorated with flowers. As they discharge the prescribed duties, consecrating their work to God, they are instinct with this integrated knowledge of God's nature and of their own nature and of their affinity to God; and hence the fragrance of the flowers spreads all over their hair. Thus it is that the infatuation of the gōpikas for Kṛṣṇa is not considered as the questionable fondness of faithless women but as the purest form of love deserving the approbation of the whole world. "Have you not heard the sound produced, when gōpikas with such fragrant hair are engaged in churning the curds?" is the enquiry the gōpikas address to their friend who remains within her house.

3. *Nāyakappen piḷḷāy!*

They address her as 'Leader.' "You are not to enjoy your experience alone. It is up to you to share it with us and enjoy it together with us." There is no difference between the two addresses, 'Mad girl' and 'Leader' in their essential import. The idea is that it is improper that she who is capable of taking the lead and guiding the others to Kṛṣṇa should lag behind and shut herself up in her room.

4. *Nārāyaṇaṁ mūrti kēśavanaip pāḍavum nikeṣṭē kiḍattiṽ*

In order to draw her out, they think of singing the praises of God's attributes and start with 'Nārāyaṇa' as it signifies His unaccountable considerateness (vātsalya) for His creatures. The word "Nāramulu" means 'all objects.' And Nārāyaṇa is the One who, remaining unseen, spreads and permeates all of them—keeping them up, sustaining them, controlling them, and becoming their very soul. This shows His boundless love and gracious

considerateness. When danger threatens, the mother takes the child into her lap for protection. Likewise, when the Deluge (Pralaya) threatens extinction of all objects with their names and forms, Nārāyaṇa absorbs them all into Himself and gives them protection. "How is it you fail to hear, when the Lord of such gracious love is praised?"

The Formless One, who is unseen and yet immanent in all, takes form (mūrti) out of sheer grace, so that even the ignorant masses might see Him with their physical eyes. Such is His accessibility that, Formless though He is, He assumes or fills in whatsoever form or image people adopt for His worship. (Yē yathā mām prapadyantē tām sthathaiva bhajāmyaham). These characteristics of the Lord enable us to seek His favour. The Supreme Self feels miserable when we are in distress; He feels hurt when we exhibit our lapses; yet unable to desert us, He clings to us without getting disgusted. Disturbed by doubt that we might drift farther away from Him, should He remain unseen, He assumes a form and body that we can with our senses see, touch and converse with; and thus He becomes easy of access to us.

He does not stop with this. Not minding the trouble involved, He punishes the enemies of His devotees. This particular quality is to be found in Kēśavan. By glorifying Kēśavan, they intend to frighten the gōpika, who is still within, into an effort to ward off the danger facing Kṛṣṇa by coming out and joining others in pronouncing benediction on him. A demon, Kēśi by name, assumes the form of a horse and attempts to kill Kṛṣṇa. But the latter kills him and receives the title Kēśava. Though the devotees know this fact, they do not have the strength to stay patient. Out of their excessive love for him, they hasten with all speed, thinking that they can themselves save him from danger. The word 'Kēśava' also means one who has lustrous and attractive locks of hair. When they hear this name, the provocative beauty of Kṛṣṇa's locks of hair presents itself before their minds. "How can you still remain in bed, after hearing us sing the names of such a Lord?"—the gōpikas thus upbraid their friend. Whenever we think of his gracious considerateness which makes him permeate all and which keeps all in him without distinction of supplicants or non-supplicants; whenever we call to mind his easy accessibility

which urges him to give up formlessness and to incarnate in a form that is easily grasped by senses; whenever we witness his strength which can destroy enemies in a trice, we find it impossible to keep away from Lord Kṛṣṇa: “How then do you manage to be still, even after hearing about all these attributes of Kṛṣṇa?”

5. *Tēṣamuḍai Yāy!*

Looking at the effulgence radiating through the crevices in the door-way, they address her as “The Radiant one.”

They have addressed her successively as ‘mad girl,’ ‘Leader’ and ‘Radiant one.’ “You cannot deny the effulgence that spiritual experience has given you. You are fit to be the leader; you can make others imbibe the same experience by making them participants in it. And yet you keep it to yourself! Is it not mad on your part to withdraw from company and enjoy it in isolation?”

6. *Tiṛavēlōrempāvāy*

“Open the door. Allow us to witness your radiance and enjoy bliss.”

Thus the gōpikas suggest that when we go to God’s presence we should keep the devotees to the fore. In the two Pāṣurams just studied, we find the query: “Have you not heard his praise^s or having heard them, how is it you lie still?.” From this, it is clear that ‘hearing’ is very important. And having heard, it is improper to lie still. Sharing spiritual experience with kindred souls is stressed as essential. By constant and attentive hearing, deep-rooted atheistic notions gradually disappear from the mind, yielding place to faith in the existence of God. The sounds are of two types—those to be assimilated from the scriptures as the preceptors teach them, and those which fall spontaneously from the lips of saints and devotees who are not only filled with such knowledge but who abide by it in practical life. By listening to these

two types of sounds, we become familiar with both scriptural knowledge and its practical application. We should not be content with merely listening to their words; but we should eagerly wish for their darśan, for their contact and company, if only to have our spiritual experience improved and intensified.



PĀŚURAM VIII

PREFACE.

With the girls awakened in the two previous Pāsurams (VI & VII) leading them, the gōpikas move ahead to arouse another friend that day. After mentioning the sounds worthy to be heard, they make the enquiry whether the first girl has heard them at all and how, after having heard them, the second girl lies still in bed. Thus the two Pāsurams deal in detail with Śravaṇa (hearing), which forms the first stage of sādhana (spiritual exercise). Śravaṇa is of three types: 1. Hearing the scriptures 2. Inferential perception 3. preceptorial instruction. And to indicate these different sounds, mention is made of three sounds in each of the previous Pāsurams. To hear the chirping of birds in the sixth and the confabulations of bharadvāja birds in the seventh Pāsurams is to hear Vēdas and Śāstrās. The birds rise at dawn, of their own accord and without any prompting from others, and indicate to others that it is time to get up from bed. The Ṛṣis, the seers, who under God's grace vision rare spiritual things, impart what they have seen to others; and these are like the birds referred to above. That they meet and discuss spiritual subjects and reach decisions is amply borne out by this verse in Īśavāsyā Upaniṣad "Iti śuśrūma pūrvēṣam yē nasta dwicha chakṣirē. Thus have we heard the elders commenting on spiritual subjects." Those who meet each other and mutually discuss their experiences about God are like the bharadvāja birds. Hearing both these types of birds indicates hearing the scriptures. To the second type of sounds they hear belong the booming sound of the conch, coming from the temple (Pāsuram VI) and the combined sounds of churning, singing and clashing of ornaments as the gōpikas are engaged in churning curds (Pāsuram VII). From the sounds, though heard at a distance, they are able to guess the form of their source and the situation. Hearing only the sound of the conch, they are able to imagine the conch, though they do not see it, and trace its sound to the temple from where it is blown. They hear the sound of churning of curds. In it are mingled

some other sounds. From this they raise a mental picture of the gōpikas, their bracelets, and the fragrant flowers falling off from their lustrous tresses of hair. Though the things with which they are connected are not directly present there, the sounds have a power to create and present their images before the minds of the hearers. The first sounds confine their effectiveness only to being heard; the second sounds, besides being heard, have helped the imagination to give shape to their sources. In neither of these sounds, do we find words which present directly God's nature or His attributes. Still they help us to understand that the dawn is near. The third sounds are the reiteration of Hari's name by munis and yōgis as they wake up (Pāsuram VI); and the singing of praises of Nārāyaṇa and Kēśava by the gōpikas (Pāsuram VII). These sounds directly present God's nature and God's attributes before us. We can regard these as similar to the instructions imparted by teachers. With this, Śravaṇa, hearing, becomes complete. Having traced the stage of hearing to its completion in the two previous hymns, the gōpikas set about to trace in this Pāsuram the fruits of reflection or meditation.

Hearing washes the impurities from the mind to a certain extent. But there are certain other impurities which stick to the mind. They keep the tendencies of passion and ignorance (Rajastamōguṇas) in a dominant position and effectively prevent the tendency of purity (sattwaguṇa) from becoming manifest. Thus our true nature is veiled from us. Ignorance, attachment, hatred, egoism, impetuous passion—these impurities of the mind should be eliminated by meditation. When the river of the mind flows over sense-objects, it gets contaminated with sin and brings us evil, as it is then filled with the waters of unwisdom (avivēka). If, on the other hand, the river of the mind is filled with waters of wisdom, vivēka, it flows towards self-knowledge and brings us infinite good. To make the mind flow towards self-knowledge, the way that leads to sense-objects should be fully closed. And that is done by renunciation. This renunciation results from constantly hearing about the imperfections in sense-objects and the sorrows that attend upon their enjoyment. The way to self-knowledge should be kept clean; and the means of doing it is preceptorial instruction. The way along which the mind should move is kept clean by the regular practice of the prescribed exercises

(Sādhanaṇuṣṭhānam) which is intended to keep steady the wisdom acquired from the instruction of the teacher. "Abhyāsēna cha Kountēya vairāgyēṇa cha grhyatē." Practice (abhyāsa) and renunciation (vairāgya) alone are capable of removing the tendencies of passion (rajas) and ignorance (tamas) and promoting the rise of the tendency to purity (sattwa); and thus they create a condition of peace to the mind, in which it accepts God alone as its support. Hearing is essential to bring about this condition.

Unless the mind attains peace, it cannot remain steadily set in God. There are four stains which cling to the mind—envy, desire to hurt others, jealousy, indignation; and the mind can never be steady, so long as they exist. Efforts should be made to eradicate them. The mind which feels distressed at seeing people with better qualities or superior achievements is said to be afflicted with envy. To get rid of this ill-feeling, it is necessary that an aspirant should cultivate friendship with them; and then, the idea that their glory is as much his as theirs, because they are friends, will strike root and drive away envy from his mind.

Imagining that others are our opponents, our minds find ways of doing them evil. By cultivating, as a contradictory measure, clemency towards them, the idea that they are our enemies eventually disappears. Jealousy always tries to misrepresent good men and twist their good qualities to make them appear as lapses and shortcomings. Instead of indulging in this unbecoming exercise of misrepresenting and accusing them, let us freely recognise their goodness and greatness and feel happy; and, in course of time, we shall overcome jealousy, when the feeling of happiness in the good fortune of others becomes habitual. When a sinner or a bad man wrongs a saint or a good man with harsh and insulting words, our minds feel excited with indignation. To eliminate this feeling, we must learn to remain indifferent to the malicious remarks of such frivolous people.

Thus by cultivating feelings of friendship, clemency, happiness and indifference, impurities of the mind such as envy, desire to hurt others, jealousy and indignation, which are the off-shoots of rajas and tamasa, are washed away; and the mind attains peace. Then there is a possibility of the mind steadily concentrating on the subject of God. In this day's hymn (Pāṣuram VIII) the gōpikas

indicate this possibility. As signifying daybreak, they point to the bright light on the eastern horizon and the marching of the buffaloes to the meadows. The gōpika to be roused today is an accomplished woman, skilled in feminine arts, and capable of stimulating the curiosity of Kṛṣṇa himself. Confident that Kṛṣṇa himself will go to her, she lies still. Considering it improper to go to Kṛṣṇa's presence without having such a lady in their midst, the other gōpikas rouse her from sleep. To the worldly-minded, night is evil. Night promotes indulgence in sense-pleasures. Night is congenial to evil machinations. Sleep, born of inertia, takes possession of us during night. We welcome the passage of night and the advent of day, because the day enables us to pursue mundane affairs. But to those yogis, who experience Kṛṣṇa's presence and attain union with him, every moment of the night is precious beyond calculation. To the gōpikas, too, night alone is the time for that unique experience and union. Once the day breaks, the elder gōpas, in whom rājasic tendency dominates, wake up and intervene. The gōpikas, who hanker after union with Kṛṣṇa, find security and refuge only in night. They fear the approach of dawn, even because those, who object to their meetings with Kṛṣṇa, might wake up and hinder their effort. Therefore, they hasten to draw out the gōpika before the night wanes.

*Kiḷ vānam vellenṛu erumai śiruvīḍu
 mēyvān parandanakāṇ mikkulla piḷḷaiḡaḷum
 pōvān pōginṛārai ppōgāmal kāttunnai
 kkūvuvān vandu ninṛōm kōḍukalamuḍaiya
 pāvāy! eḷundirāy, pādipparaikonḍu
 māvāy piḷandānai mallarai māṭṭiya
 devādi devanai ccenṛu nām śeviṭṭāl
 āvāvenṛā rāyṇdaruḷelō rempāvāy.*

Summary.

Day is breaking on the east. The buffaloes are released for feed; they are freely making their way to the small meadow. The other girls are proceeding to the place of the ritual, as though

their whole purpose lies in reaching there. We have stopped them; and we come here to invite you; we stand in your courtyard. O woman of intense longing! wake up and join us. Let us praise Kṛṣṇa's attributes and launch upon our ritual; let us obtain 'parai' which is the essential implement required for our rite. Let us adore Kṛṣṇa. He has killed the demon, Kēṣi, by splitting him into two; he has destroyed the wrestlers, Chāṇūra and Muṣṭika; he is the God of all gods, God of all the celestials. When we go to him and render him worship, he will feel upset that we have taken the trouble of going to him, and will hasten to consider all the aspects of our situation and grant us what we want.

Commentary.

1. *Kiṭvānam veḷḷenṇu*

It may be argued that the sounds mentioned in the previous Pāśurams can be heard even at midnight. So they tell this gōpika to look at the eastern horizon where the daybreak is visible. The gōpika replies from within: "You are mistaken in thinking that the dawn has set in. One of you must have looked in the eastern direction; and her effulgent aura, which is the outcome of constant spiritual experience, must have spread to the horizon and brightened it. So I refuse to believe that it is dawn; and I reject your conclusion as due to mistaken perception."

The brightness on the eastern horizon which precedes sunrise indicates the uprise of the tendency of purity (sattvagūṇa) and the suppression of the tendencies of passion and ignorance (rajas-tamogūṇas). This is the state of mental peace which precedes the upsurge of knowledge. When we are in the presence of sages, their aura sometimes spreads over us; and under its influence, our minds appear to have attained peace. But this is not the same as the natural mental peace, which is a necessary pre-requisite to the sprouting of knowledge. The gōpika from within therefore enquires whether they can show any other sign to confirm that it is dawn. And then, they adduce, as proof, the herds of she-buffaloes moving out freely to graze on the meadows nearby. It is usual to drive the she-buffaloes a little before dawn into the small meadows close by, so that they may graze to their fill on

the dew-filled grass and return to the cattle-sheds to yield milk. Later, they are turned into the distant meadows in the woods for the whole day. This sign of the dawn, the letting loose of she-buffaloes into the meadows, has been given by their ancestors also; Śrī Vipranārāyaṇa, while rousing Śrī Ranganātha, has made reference to a similar situation. All the earlier devotees sing to awaken God. Āṇḍāl alone sings to awaken God's devotees. Her idea seems to be that awakening devotees brings us greater good than awakening God; and this idea is the essence of the Vēda. That form of worship of God into which we are initiated by a preceptor, alone bears fruit. (Ācharyāddhaiva viditā vidyā sādhiṣṭam prāpat). Having known this dictum, she sets about awakening sages so as to secure their goodwill in advance.

In spite of being the daughter of Viṣṇuchitta, the best among Brāhmins, Āṇḍāl does not make mention of sacred fires and oblations. Rather, she recounts buffaloes and meadows, probably to show that, having assumed the guise of a gōpika, she is familiar only with them. From this, it is clear that she becomes fully possessed of the characteristics of a gōpika.

What is most essential for this ritual is becoming perfect in the nature and qualities of a gōpika. He who is convinced that God alone is the means to attaining Him, makes no claim of his having found any particular method of reaching Him. He does not have any other means, he does not have any other end, than God. The young woman to be awakened on this day has reached the zenith in both these convictions of ākinchanya and ananya gatitwa. She tenaciously clings to the practice of the doctrine that God is both her means and goal. So she expects that He will go and claim her; and she feels that it is improper for her to go in search of Him. That is why Kṛṣṇa seems to have developed intense longing for her. Such devotees are as dear to Kṛṣṇa as he is to himself. He equates them with himself. The gōpikas fear that, unless they keep her to the fore, Kṛṣṇa might not care to cast even a gracious glance at them. So they awaken her and entreat her to join them.

Yōgaśāstra details four types of spiritual trance or concentration. One of them is the state where the mind, supported by the form of the object of contemplation, severs itself from

all other objects. This state is called *samprajñāta samādhi*. This state again is of four kinds—with accent (1) on argument (*vitarkānugatam*) (2) on enquiry (*vichārānugatam*) (3) on bliss (*ānandānugatam*) and (4) on egoism (*asmitānugatam*). The first of these, again, is of four kinds; the second of three kinds; the third of two kinds; while the last remains as one. All told, there are thus ten different kinds of spiritual trance. The ten *gōpikas* that are to be awakened may be deemed to represent these various states of *samādhi*. The means to reach the various states of *samādhi* are mentioned as steady repetition of *Praṇava*, meditation on its meaning, and constant practice of the presence of the Lord. The two previous *Pāṣurams* deal with the steady repetition of *Ōmkāra*. In this is expounded the means of meditation on its meaning. Meditation on the meaning of *Praṇava* consists in remaining steadfast with the conviction that “I belong to God only.” The *gōpika* of this *Pāṣuram* is in this state. The characteristics of non-apprehension (*tamas*) and misapprehension (*rajas*) disintegrate, allowing those of true apprehension (*sattwa*) to sprout forth. The reference to the brightness on the eastern sky, a symbol of the dawn, is meant to indicate the uprise of *sattwa*. But the *gōpika* counters from within that it is not a sign of dawn; and that they think wrongly that it exists while it does not. Then they advance another feature to confirm that it is dawn.

2. *Eṇumaiṣiṟuviḍu mēyvān parandanakāṇ*

“She-buffaloes are moving out to graze on the small meadow.” A little before daybreak, the she-buffaloes are let loose into the small meadow; after they graze on the dew-filled grass, they are turned back into the sheds and milked. Later, they are taken into the woods, there to graze all through the day. The *gōpikas* can meet *Kṛṣṇa* only during night; when the day dawns, *Kṛṣṇa* is not available to them. They wonder why, knowing this, the *gōpika* lies still without rushing out to meet him. But the woman from within tells them that what they see are not she-buffaloes, but only masses of darkness broken by the light of their complexions. For long the *gōpikas* have been pining for contact with *Kṛṣṇa*; now that the opportunity has presented itself, they are unable to contain their joy; and so they move out at once so as to meet him before the night wanes. Fearing that the day may break

at any time, they turn their looks to the east again and again. As they do so, the light of experienced love that glistens in their faces spreads like moon-beams towards the east. Thus arguing, the woman from within rejects their statement that the day is about to break. In this situation, there is parallelism between the external facts and the internal mental process. It is true that externally light appears on the eastern sky, dissipating darkness; and the she-buffaloes move out from the sheds into the meadow. Internally, the tendencies of passion (rajas) and of inertia (tamas) clear out of the mind; but still their residual impressions (vāsanas) remain. They are out only for the time being, like the she-buffaloes being out in the small meadow; and the tendency to purity (sattwa), which rises just then with brightness, imparts peace to the mind, thus preparing it for spiritual experience. It is only after dawn that the she-buffaloes are driven into the far-off woods; and it is only after getting God's secure support that the tendencies of rajas and tamas leave for good. The gōpikas pressurise the lady within to hasten out, so that they might not miss this congenial moment of meeting God. That moment is precious; just then they are beside themselves with love for Him and there is every chance of their meeting Him, and as its consequence, of banishing for good the two qualities of rajas and tamas.

It looks as though the gōpikas exhort us to learn from the example of the she-buffaloes. Even the she-buffaloes, whose dominant tendency is inertia, move out, at break of day, for food and graze on the meadows. "Should we, whose tendency is for purity, not bestir ourselves to find food for our souls and enjoy it in the Supreme Self? The she-buffaloes move out, with 'finding food' as their only objective; they have no other concern to distract them. Likewise, we should proceed with the sole objective of enjoying the Supreme Self." Though fully aware of this, the lady within does not recognise these signs as showing the approach of dawn; she takes them as projections into the outside world of the mental states of the lovers of God. Hence, she enquires whether any others, besides the callers, have taken it to be dawn and whether they too have started out.

3. *mikkulla piḷḷaiḡaḷum pōvānpōginṛāraip pōḡamal kattu
unnai kkūvuvān vandu ninṛōm kōḍukalamuḍaiya pāvāy
eḷundirāy pāḍipparai koṇḍu:—*

"Other girls too are going as though 'going' is all that they have to do. We have stopped them from proceeding further, and come here and stand before you to take you with us."

"Not only we, but all the young women of the village, are proceeding in a large crowd. Doubtless, their aim is to meet Kṛṣṇa; but they are not worried whether they will ultimately reach him or not. They seem to derive the greatest happiness in merely going along that way for him."

When Akrūra is commissioned by Kamsa to bring Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma from Brindāvan, Akrūra considers that going to Brindāvan itself is a great privilege and feels very happy. Bharata learns from Bharadvāja that Rāma is at Chitrakūṭa and finds from him the way to reach the place. As he begins the trek following the Ṛṣi's directions, he feels exhilarated as though all the bliss lies for him in walking the distance. In a similar way, liberated souls find greater happiness in marching along the path leading to Heavenly Abode than in actually reaching it. In secular affairs, the way to the goal bristles with troubles; but once the destination is reached, happiness prevails. In spiritual matters, the objective as well as the striving towards it are enjoyable; both yield pleasure. The gōpikas find bliss in their aspiration for Kṛṣṇa; they consider that all pleasure lies in moving towards him.

The girl from within says: "Now that all are gone, why need I rise and come? You, too, may move forward." To this her friends reply: "The girls have marched on in ecstasy and are not conscious of what they are doing. When they are told that you are yet to come, they are startled into a sudden halt. Have we not taken a pledge that we shall not do things that have not been done by our ancestors? Haven't our elders adhered to the hoary practice that we should not proceed without having to the fore devotees loved of God? Shall we give up now that healthy convention? So we have stopped our friends and come here to invite you. We feel a greater zeal in inviting you to join us than in reaching the Supreme One. Even if we ultimately fail to have you to lead us, it is enough satisfaction for us to have come and stood before you to extend our invitation. To have come to you and to have stood in your courtyard—these two are the most desirable things for us to do; and we are happy to have done them."

Let us recall to mind how in the hoary past, Vālmīki describes Vibhīṣaṇa who, after having been denounced by Rāvaṇa, goes to Rāma for succour; "Uttaram tīra māsādyā khaṣṭha ēva vyatiṣṭhata: Vibhīṣaṇa reached the northern coast and remained standing (before Rāma) in mid-air." Vālmīki could very well have said that "Vibhīṣaṇa stood in mid-air on the northern coast, "Uttarē tīrē khē atiṣṭhat." But he chooses the former way of presenting the position: 'Tīra māsādyā: reached the shore.' This shows that Vibhīṣaṇa has considered that reaching the northern shore itself is the most desirable and profitable thing, apart from the question of his securing succour from Rāma. Again, instead of saying that "he stood in mid-air," Vālmīki chooses the words "he remained standing in mid-air." In thus putting it, the idea seems to be that Vibhīṣaṇa has come there prepared to stay in mid-air looking on Rāma and his following; for, nothing seems more desirable than this. A similar strain is noticeable in the gōpikas, when they say "vandu ninṇōm: we have come, we have stood in your courtyard. To have come to you satisfies our purpose and to have stood in your courtyard fulfils our aim. We have succeeded in this; what else need we have?"

The girl within enquires why, when so many of them are there, they are particular that she also should join them. They answer: "Kōḍukala muḍaiya pāvāy": "O woman of intense yearning! will Kṛṣṇa deign to look at us if we fail to stop at your house and take you with us? Stopping at your place and inviting you will secure for us kindness and consideration at Kṛṣṇa's hands. He will surely welcome you with honour; and we know that, without you, life loses its savour for him. Don't we know how much he yearns for you? You must lead us to his presence. You are a woman yourself; and women alone can appreciate the struggles and miseries of women. Sīta is praised as the noblest of women, even because she has shown how full she is of feminine nature. Nārīṇām uttamā vadhūḥ. Unable to endure the sufferings of fellow-women forcibly confined in prison by Rāvaṇa, Sīta has fallen into his captivity herself and got all of them released. Such perfect womanhood is yours too. You are perfect in the three principal qualities (Ākāratraya) which are essential for women: You belong to him and to no other (ananya bhāṣatwa); you seek refuge in him and in no other (ananya śaraṇatwa); and you allow

yourself to be enjoyed by him and by no other (ananya bhōgyatwa). Enable us to secure this perfect femininity and help us to the attainment of union with Kṛṣṇa. Pray, wake up! Our hearts rejoice in observing how every limb of yours pulsates as you rise. We gladly regard such a vision as the appropriate reward for our journey to your place."

The lady from within enquires what she is to do after waking up. The others answer: "Pāḍi paṛai koṇḍu." We should sing Lord Kṛṣṇa's praises and obtain the instrument of Paṛai from him. Will you allow this opportunity to slip? Have the elders allowed us so long to join together in enjoying the Lord's love? However intense our love for Kṛṣṇa be, we have, till now, to experience it alone, each by herself. Hitherto our village was like the capital of Hiranyakaśapa in which the Lord's praises were banned. Now that the opportunity has come, let us make good the loss, sustained previously, by joining together in singing his praises again and again to our hearts' content. Thus singing, let us meet Kṛṣṇa and obtain from him the Paṛai which solves the problem of drought for the people; and let us also realise our objectives of union with Kṛṣṇa and of service to him." The lady from within raises a doubt: "Even if we sing his praises, will he deign to give us so easily what we need so badly?" In answer, the gōpikas describe some characteristics of Kṛṣṇa.

4. *Māvāy piḷandānai*

"He has split the mouth of the horse."

"Catching in both hands the jaws of the horse, which is possessed by the demon Kēṣi, he has split his mouth into two, thus saving himself and also us. If Kēṣi has succeeded in killing Kṛṣṇa, we too will have ceased to exist." The Supreme Self protects not Himself but us who form His body. Kēṣi is no other than Ego. The self which is different from body identifies itself with the body; and then it is called "Ego" or "Aham." Until this ego perishes, knowledge about the truth—that the Supreme is the soul of my soul and that my soul is His body and that my soul is fit to remain united with Him—does not emerge. "Kṛṣṇa has killed Kēṣi in order that he may keep us always with him. How then can it be said that he will be beyond our reach?" The girl from

within brushes this aside by observing: "This was what happened in Brindāvan. Kṛṣṇa has passed the stage of innocence; no longer does he worry to hanker after simple women. He will not care for such uncivilised women as us. He is beyond our reach. He has tasted the draught of sweet words and blandishments of the civilised women of Mathura." To this, the callers reply: "Be it so. Whether it is the rustic women of Vrēpalle or the civilised women of Mathura, it is all the same. What he wants are young women. It is for the sake of women in Mathura that he has destroyed the wrestlers. Wherever he be, he will not give up his infatuation for women. So he is sure to be kind to us."

5. "Mallarai māṭṭiya"

"He has destroyed the wrestlers."

He has done this only to attract the hearts of the women of Mathura. Those wrestlers are no others than Kāma (Desire) and Krōdha (Anger). Born of the tendency of passion (rajōguṇa), these two warriors prevent us from reaching the Supreme Self. Kamsa has employed them to kill Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa has destroyed them, knowing that unless they are exterminated Kamsa's influence does not wane. Nescience (Avidya) which clings to the individual self (jīva) does not disappear unless twin-qualities like Kāma and Krōdha are overcome. *Dwandwāṭṭiṭaḥ, Dwandwān samatityā*. The Gīta exhorts, time and again, that these twin-wrestlers should be overcome. "Let us therefore glorify him and attain the highest end. Do not doubt his capacity to give us what we need, thinking that he is after all one of us."

6. *Dēvādi dēvanai*"

"He is the God of the gods. He is the Cause for the emergence of other celestial gods like Brahma, Rudra and Indra. *Kṛṣṇa ēvahi bhūtānām utpaṣṭi rapichāpyaḥ*. Kṛṣṇa alone is the source from which all elements emerge and into which all elements dissolve. Kṛṣṇa is the Causal Phenomenon. He is the Adorable. He is the Giver of all *puruṣārthas*. Arise! Glorify him and have your highest wish fulfilled. Do not entertain the fear that he who is the Supreme will not deign to look upon us, simple and weak womenfolk."

7. "ccenṇu nām śēvittāl āvā venṇārāyṇḍaruḷ ēlōrempāvāy

"When we go to him and serve him, he will feel distressed that he has ignored us so long; and, accosting us with warmth, he will bestow kindness on us."

Our attaining the Supreme Self is not for our sake, but for His sake only. We are His belongings; He receives us for His own sake. He is perfect with unique attributes. As we are sentient beings, we are unable to keep still, particularly so when we are away from Him. In our distress, we hasten to Him, unable to wait till He comes to us. Then He feels very much upset. When the Ṛṣis come to meet Śrī Rāma in Daṇḍakāranya, the latter feels very miserable and expresses his distress that he has not, as he should have, himself met them earlier and served them. He feels ashamed and expresses regret for having failed to go to them earlier. He is upset that by his thoughtless delay he has caused such anxiety to them that they themselves hasten to meet him. God cannot endure the thought of the strain we undergo when we go on foot to meet Him. When we attempt to serve Him after going to Him, He feels more upset and worries thus: "Oh, why serve me ? Is not the trouble taken in walking to me enough? See how your tender feet have swollen with walking?" That shows the measure of His distress. Let us recall another situation in the Rāmāyaṇa. Guha leaves his town, goes on foot in the direction in which Śrī Rāma is coming into the woods, and meets him half way and offers hospitality to him. Śrī Rāma tells him: "padbhyāmabhiḡgamācchaiva snēha sandarśanēnacha." "Guha, how great is your love for me! It has made you walk this long distance to meet me. Is not this enough? What more hospitality do I need? You have extended hospitality to me already by the trouble you have taken in coming to me". God considers that walking towards Him is enough service to Him. He feels miserable when He is unable to fulfil our wishes or grant the boons we beg of Him. Witness how Śrī Rāma suffers agony, when he is unable to agree to the coronation proposed by Bharata in all humility. "Śirasā yāchata stasya vachanam nakṛtam mayā". "How very unfortunate that I could not fulfil the wish of Bharata, even when he begged me with bowed

head." Not only does God feel distressed, He offers sympathy and succour. Rāma shows mercy and saves the crow that has committed an outrage on Sīta, who is as dear to him as his very life. Such is the measure of his grace to an enemy! "Will not Kṛṣṇa show us mercy, when we go and stand before him with fond love? Maybe, he may feel a little irritation that we, who are his dependants and who should have waited for his coming, have violated the usual code by going to him. This may cool the ardour of his love; but cannot disturb his natural ever-flowing grace. This graciousness is there so long as he is there. So let us sing his glories and attain the highest end. Let us go and render all services that are dear to him. It is our nature to render such services even if he is angry with us. Arise! and lead us!"



PĀŚURAM IX

PREFACE

So far three gōpikas have been roused from sleep. Today, the party awakens a fourth gōpika. This woman is an adept in the cultivation of the principle that the Supreme alone is the means to attain the Supreme, and that there is no other means (ananyōpāyatwa). Those who hold this conviction leave aside all other means and concentrate their minds on Him, as both the means and the end. They even give up all self-effort in attaining Him. This state of mind is similar to that of being steadily established in wisdom, (sthitaprajñāvasta), a state reached by sages. In the previous Pāsurams, expressions like 'Haven't you heard?' 'Having heard why are you still in bed?' 'Arise', are used. From now on, in four Pāsurams, the words used are: "Sleep is improper", "Give up sleep". Thus the accent is shifted to 'sleep'. By 'sleep' is meant withdrawing from all activities and getting engrossed in God-consciousness or spiritual experience. This condition of steady establishment in wisdom (sthitaprajñāvasta) is common both to the self-knowing sage and to the self-donating devotee. The Yōga Śāstra mentions that the renunciation inherent in the stage of samādhī (spiritual trance) becomes manifest in four states. These four states are elucidated in the Bhagavad-Gīta in four successive stanzas:

They are: 1. Yatamānāvastha 2. Vyatirēkāvastha
3. Ekēndriyāvastha 4. Vaśikārāvastha

1. Complete withdrawal of senses from their objects.
2. Complete detachment from things non-spiritual.
3. Undistracted contemplation on God.
4. Renunciation of all desires and residual tendencies (Vāsanāṣ) for serene bliss in God.

1. The state in which the yōgi turns away his senses from their objects is similar to that of the tortoise withdrawing its organs into its shell at will.

2. The state where the yōgi is not at all interested in non-spiritual, mundane objects and where meeting loved ones yields no pleasure, and separation from them causes no pain.

3. The state in which the yōgi feels no depression when sorrows visit him, and no elation when joys attend on him; devoid of all attachments, fear or anger, he contemplates on spiritual matters with perfect equanimity.

4. Engrossed in the bliss of God-consciousness, the yōgi renounces all other desires (vānchas) together with their latent tendencies (vāsanās). This last state is the highest of all. The yōgi who has attained to this state is free from desire; and so even if he indulges in pleasures, they do not cling to him. One who has attained to this contemplation on his affinity with God will have serenity about him. In this Hymn this last state, Vaṣṭkārāvastha, is presented. The other three states will be presented in the three succeeding Pāsurams. The same order is followed in the Bhagavad Gīta as well. The gōpika within is in this state of serenity, having given up all activity, because of her conviction that God alone is the Upāya, the means to attaining Him. But her friends outside, who know that God is the objective to be attained (Upēya) struggle in their effort to reach Him. God has two facets: He is both the means (Upāya) and the end (Uyēya). For the individual self to reach God, God alone is the means (Upāya). For the individual self, God again is the final objective to attain (Upēya). Those who know that He alone is the means give up all activity and remain inert. Those that know that He is the end are aware that they cannot, by themselves, reach Him. Still they struggle in their distress to find a way to Him. Those who know Him to be the means should not for their own sake indulge in any activity to attain Him. But they can certainly go to the rescue of other struggling aspirants and help resolve their distress with all their strength of mind, word and action. The gōpika within has reached the zenith in her firm abidance in God as the means, and so has completely given up all self-effort. She forsakes all activity both for herself and for others; she lies still, as though overlaid with dumbness and deafness. In her mansion of mirrors, she lies in sound sleep on her soft couch, surrounded with burning wicks and pervaded with the aroma of scented sticks. Engrossment in God-experience is what constitutes her unique strength; and the

mansion of mirrors is its symbol. Those who are in this mansion have no desire for other pleasures, however manifold their attractions may be. Instead, they always enjoy the happiness of union with God. "Ātmanyēvātmanā tuṣṭaḥ." The woman they are going to awaken is in this particular state.

Pāśurams VI & VII have dealt with *Śravaṇam* (hearing) and *mananam* (meditation). This Pāśuram and the succeeding three Pāśurams elucidate *Dhyānam* (contemplation). The gōpika to be awakened now has reached the highest stage in contemplation.

*Tūmaṇi māḍattucurṟum viḷakkeriya
tūpam kamaḷattuyilaṇai mēḷ kaṇvaḷarum
māmān magalē maṇikkadavam tāḷ tīravāy
māmīr! avaḷai yeḷuppīrō un magalḍān
ūmaiyo anṇicceviḍō anandalō
ē mapperunduyil mandirappaṭṭālō
'māmāyan, māḍavan, vaigundan'' enṇenṟu
nāmam palavum navinṇēlō rempāvāy.*

Summary.

O daughter of aunt, who is sound asleep on the comfortable couch, surrounded by flaming wicks and pervaded with the aroma of scented sticks, in your mansion made of pure gems of all the nine varieties! Lift the latch of the door studded with gems. O aunt, you, at least, may awaken her. Is your daughter dumb or deaf or ill with disease? Or could it be that guards are kept to disallow her movement? Or is she under a spell, cast to keep her in sound sleep? Sing and glorify His names: "The mysterious wizard, Mahāmāyāvi, Mādhava, the Lord of Lakṣmi, Vaikunṭha-vāsā, Resident of the Heavenly Abode," and other such names, and see that she wakes up.

Commentary.

1. *Tūmaṇi māḍattu*

The gōpika to be awakened today sleeps in a mansion of mirrors. The mansion is made of pure gems of all the nine varieties.

The gōpikas take delight in describing the mansion and the mode of her lying down to sleep. It is said that even if we are unable to meditate on God, we get salvation by bringing to our minds the manner in which a devotee enjoys his spiritual experience. The gōpikas begin to enjoy the beauty of her mansion, which is made of pure gems. The words 'pure' and 'stainless' appear to be synonymous. But there is a little difference in meaning. That which has had a stain at one time but is now free from it is called 'stainless' (nirmala). That which has had no touch of contamination at any time is called "pure" (parisuddha). The Supreme Self is ever immaculate. His pure attributes are never affected by the attacks of sin. His knowledge and bliss never suffer diminution by ignorance or nescience. Hence they appear ever self-effluent. The individual self (jīva), by his very nature, possesses attributes such as knowledge and bliss; but contact with Prakṛti suppresses them sometimes. Once he is free from connection with Prakṛti, the individual self becomes stainless and shines. Thus the Supreme is ever *pure* and is never affected with stain. The individual self, by cleansing himself of contaminations which have once affected him, becomes *stainless*; and then shines. The Supreme is immanent in all individual selves; and thus the individual self becomes the residence of the Supreme. Again, the Supreme Self is the Home of the individual self. As the Supreme is ever the pure Effulgence, this abode looks like a mansion constructed with pure gems. As the individual selves have at one time been contaminated, they cannot be 'pure' residences; but as the Supreme is immanent in them, they become "stainless." This gōpika is living in God's Home or abiding in spiritual experience; and this is signified by the expression, "Tūmaṇi mādam: mansion made of pure gems."

The Supreme Lord has caused the raising of mansions with pure and choice gems for the residence of his beloved women of the palace, who are no other than liberated souls. Then He has raised His own residence with the remnants. That is why the Ālṅkāra have said "Tulavilli maṅgaḷam," that the buildings consecrated to worship are 'without blemish'; they have not characterised them as 'pure.' But the building in which the gōpika has lain has arrested attention by its enchanting beauty; and the girls, instead of entering it, begin to sing its praises. That is as much

as to say, that the spiritual experience of the girl within casts such spell upon the others that they become unaware of their longing to have similar experience. As the mansion in which she resides is God Himself, the beauty of its form outbids attention, owing to its true nature; and to indicate this, they begin with the words 'pure gem,' *tūmaṇi*.

When Lord Kṛṣṇa calls on the garland-maker, the latter gladly welcomes him and Balarāma with the words: "Prasāda paramau nāthau mama gēha mupāgatau: My Lords, Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa, have in them the quality of graciousness, far excelling the quality of lordship. That is why they have come to my humble abode." To show his pleasure on this gesture of theirs, he says: "nāthau prasāda paramau." "Graciousness excels lordship." In a similar way, the expression 'Immaculate gem' (*tūmaṇi*) is used here to signify that gems, which naturally shine always, have their brilliance excelled by their great purity. In this mansion, studded with gems, lies the woman who enjoys the phenomenon of God, which is ever self-effulgent and which is never affected by the despicable fundamental qualities of *sattwa*, *rajas* and *tamas*.

Gems are of nine varieties. The kinship that the self has with God is also of nine kinds: 1. (*Pitṛputra bhāva*) Between father and son 2. (*Rakṣarakṣaka bhāva*) Between saviour and the saved 3. (*Śeṣa śeṣi bhāva*) Between owner and the owned 4. (*Bhartṛbhāryā bhāva*) Between husband and wife 5. (*Jñātṛ-jñeya bhāva*) Between the knowable and the knower 6. (*Swaswāmi bhāva*) Between master and servant. (7) *Ādhāra ādhēya bhāva*) Between sustainer and the sustained 8. (*Śarīrātma bhāva*) Between soul and the body 9 (*Bhōktṛ bhōgya bhāva*) Between the enjoyer and the enjoyed. This composite kinship is succinctly expressed in this *Ślōka*:

"Pitācha rakṣakaḥ śeṣhī bhartā jñēyō Ramāpatiḥ
Swāmyādhārō mamātmā cha Bhōktā chādya manūditaḥ"

Thus, for the individual self the Supreme is 1. father 2. saviour 3. owner 4. husband 5. knowable 6. master 7. sustainer 8. soul 9. enjoyer. To contemplate on the Supreme in these nine aspects of kinship is called 'Prajña.' To remain steady and undistracted in this contemplation is the state called *Sthita*

Prajñāvastha. By having this steady contemplation, the mind acquires peace. That prasādaguṇa, mental peace, is symbolised by the prāsāda, the mansion. The girl who has climbed into this state of peace (prāsāda of prajña) is being roused this day. When we meditate on these relationships with others, unconnected with God, the relationships themselves become polluted. But to link them up with God and see them in Him makes for purity.

1. **Father-son kinship:** In this world, we consider him as father from whom we derive our (upādhis) physical bodies. But if we examine the reality, the Supreme Self is the Father of all living creatures. “Aham bījapradāḥ pitā. I alone am the Father who have planted the seed of self in the soil of the body.” To recognise God as the Father and to behave like a son towards Him is to maintain the Father-son kinship.

2. **The Saviour-saved relationship:** We call those “saviours” who protect us when the body is threatened with danger. The Supreme not only provides physical protection but also saves the soul when it is immersed in the ocean of samsāra or in the cycle of birth-and-death, “Mṛtyu samsāra sāgarāt uddharāmi. I alone save people by lifting them from the ocean of samsāra, of bondage to non-self” Thus has Lord Kṛṣṇa declared in the Gīta. To know that the Supreme alone is the real Saviour is to keep the Saviour-saved relationship.

3. **The Owner-owned relationship:** All the activities that the sentient self carries on through the insentient body are to tend to His glory; they do not belong to the self. To have this knowledge that all our activities—physical, vocal and mental—belong to Him only, is to maintain the Owner-owned relationship.

4. **Husband-wife relationship:** It has become a common convention to take the physical relationship of man and woman and to regard the woman as ‘wife’ and the man as ‘husband.’ These names have come to them because in life, ‘Bharta,’ the husband, is the supporter; and Bhārya, the wife, is the supported. But, strictly speaking, the Supreme alone is the Supporter. He alone bears the burden of the whole world of sentient beings and insentient matter. This body exists, stands and moves and the soul retains its true nature—all because of His support. To know

Him as the Supporter and the whole world as being borne by Him is to be aware of the Husband-wife relationship.

5. The Knowable-knower relationship: We learn several things in the world, and we think that these are different from one another. But we have yet to know the Supreme One, who pervades all external objects in Nature and who is immanent in the individual self. If the soul is not within, the external world remains incomprehensible. To understand that He alone is the Knowable by all kinds of knowledge is to keep up the Knowable-knower relationship.

6. Master-servant relationship: It is usual for us to claim certain things in the world as our possessions; and we hold a right over them. The individual selves are the property of the Supreme; and He is their Lord and Master. He has the right to command them. To consider Him as the Master and ourselves as His possessions is to hold the Master-servant relationship.

7. The Sustainer-sustained relationship: God alone is the Sustainer of the whole universe. "Matsthāni sarvabhūtāni: "All elements depend on me for sustenance." Such is the declaration of Lord Kṛṣṇa. To abide in the conviction that He is the Sustenance is to be alive to the Sustainer-sustained relationship.

8. Soul-body relationship: This body cannot exist if the soul does not exist; it cannot remain apart from the soul. It is dependent upon the soul and is obedient to it. Likewise, the individual selves cannot exist if the Supreme Self does not exist; they cannot remain apart from Him. They are commanded by Him to do things that are within their competence; and their whole activity is for His sake. To keep ever fresh the thought that the Supreme is the soul of the individual self and that the individual self is the body of the Supreme, is to maintain the Soul-body relationship.

9. The Enjoyer-enjoyed relationship: The individual self thinks that he is enjoying all things in life. He who enjoys is the 'bhōkta'; and that which is enjoyed is 'bhōgya.' But, in reality, the Enjoyer of the fruits of all our activities is Śrīmannārāyaṇa. Lord Kṛṣṇa has declared: "I am both the Lord and the Enjoyer of all ritualistic sacrifices." "Ahamhi sarva yajñānāṃ bhōktācha Prabhurēvacha." To know this truth is to maintain the Enjoyer-enjoyed relationship.

The greatest benefit that Prajña confers is this knowledge of the ninefold relationship that exists between the individual self and the Supreme Self. One who knows this kinship rests in peace without any conflict, with the Supreme ensconced in his inmost heart. The nine varieties of gems represent knowledge of the nine-fold kinship with God. In the mansion built with those nine kinds of gems the gōpika lies asleep. That is, the gōpika is enjoying God-experience with perfect equanimity of mind. Those who lack knowledge of this close kinship are bereft of equanimity of mind; and, consequently, suffer from want of peace. People who are engrossed in the subject of God, though they are still in the physical frame given by Nature (Prakṛti), will find in their inmost hearts the auspicious and divine Image manifesting Itself. This Image is unrelated to Prakṛti and embodies the subtle essence of the being (Panchōpaniṣanmaya vighraha). It is thus that they enjoy God-experience in their minds. The gōpika that is now roused is in the enjoyment of such experience, as she lies in yōgic sleep in her gem-studded mansion.

2. “*Curṛum viḷakkeriya*”

“While wicks are shining all around.” Even when brightness prevails in the gem-studded mansion, because of the sparkle of the gems, it is auspicious to kindle the wicks also and keep them burning. That is why wicks are kept lit in God’s presence even during daytime. This wick stands for the light of knowledge, born of the study of śāstras and scriptures. With the aid that comes from it, spiritual experience shines all the better. Light serves to expel outward darkness; the light of scriptural knowledge chases the darkness within.

“Hartum tamaḥ sadasatī cha vivēktum Īśaḥ
Māmam pradīpamiva kāruṇiko dadāti.”

“To dissolve darkness (tamas), to discriminate between what is and what is not, (between the self and the not-self), the gracious Lord has given us the lamp of Śāstras.” The gōpika of this day enjoys spiritual experience born of scriptural knowledge. As hers is a mansion of mirrors, the light of the wicks burning within is visible from outside. Likewise, the knowledge of those enjoying spiritual experience shines so as to be perceived by outsiders.

3. *tūpaṁ kamaḷa*

“As the scent of burning incense pervades”—With wicks lit around and the fragrance of incense pervading, this gōpika stretches herself on her couch. Sweet scents are highly distasteful to lovers suffering pangs of separation; but not so in this case; they help her to sleep soundly. This gives room to the conjecture that quite probably she has attained union with Kṛṣṇa. The incense has been emitting fragrance and no smoke, thus affording delightful sensation to the nose without causing irritation to the eye. In her case, knowledge has not remained theoretical; it has extended into practice. Knowledge is the light; and practice is the fragrance. Only those who possess both of them can attain to spiritual experience. A reference to birds and their chirping has been made in previous hymns; and these birds are the Ṛṣis; and their two wings are knowledge and practice; and they alone do roam about in the sky of spiritual experience. Now, in this Pāṣuram, the gōpika has been sleeping with the same knowledge as lamp and practice as incense. She has passed the stages of hearing and meditation and reached the stage of contemplation. This is the Vasikārāvastha, the state of bliss, in which desires together with their residual impressions disappear. In this state, senses renounce their functions even when surrounded by pleasures. The mind has recoiled from them and lost its relish for them, even as it is absorbed with spiritual experience. This state is elucidated in a śloka in the Bhagavadgīta beginning with: “Prajahāti yadā kāmān.” This is the state when the mind concentrates on the Supreme and renounces all desires and their residual tendencies.

4. *“Tuyilaṇai mēl kaṇ vaḷarum:*

“Lying on a soft bed which induces sound sleep.” Beds are of different kinds. Some are used for sitting; and some others for pleasure-sports. But there are some which are specifically designed for inducing sleep. If only the body touches such a bed, it goes to sleep, however much it is habituated to resist it. It is strange that while the gōpikas outside have been suffering from sleeplessness, this woman within the mansion manages to sleep so soundly on the couch which is meant for two. From this they jump to the conclusion that he too must have been with her; without him, how is it possible for her to get sleep?

The girl within is firmly rooted in the conviction that He alone is *the means to attaining Him*, and none else, and therefore has given up all self-effort. The end that she seeks is not hers; it is His; and so, He alone must accomplish it. She holds tenaciously to this conviction and remains steady in the practice thereof, thus showing strong abidance in Him *as means* to achieve the objective. There is no flutter of excitement to attain Him. Hers is *upāya niṣṭha*. There are others who know that God is the means of attaining Him, and that He is the end to be attained; yet they undertake some work or other, (without thinking whether it is effective or not), simply because they cannot patiently wait till He goes to them and becomes available as the means to accomplish their purpose. They meditate on His nature, form and attributes and make efforts of their own for moving towards Him. Such are the *gōpikas* remaining outside; their abidance is in God as *the end to be attained*. Theirs is *upēya niṣṭha*; and so they are unable to remain steady anywhere; they start to seek Kṛṣṇa and have Him. The sleep-inducing bed is God Himself. "To be with Him" constitutes "sleep"; and sleep gives relief from all the activities of the senses. And such people as the *gōpika* within are called "*nivṛttimārga niṣṭhas*," adepts in the path of renunciation of self-effort.

5. "*Māmān magalē*"

"O daughter of aunt!" Gōdādēvi who has in spirit become a *gōpika*, now forges physical relationships with other *gōpikas*. It is quite natural to forge spiritual kinship with great men as 'preceptors' and 'benefactors' and call them by such names. To forge physical relationships with such people—although no such relationships actually exist—and to call them as 'uncle' 'brother-in-law' or 'grandfather' and to adjust our behaviour accordingly towards them makes for an uplift in our nature.

6. "*Maṇikkadavam tāḷ tiravāy*"

"Open the latch of the gem-studded doors."

The mansion is built of gems; its doors are also made of gems. In the result, it is not possible for the people outside to make out where the doors are located. So they request her to open the

doors. The woman within tells them to open the doors themselves and get in; but they do not agree to the proposal and repeat their request to her to open the doors. It is not possible to eliminate, by self-effort, the feeling of attachment to the body, which is the result of identifying it with self. This wrong identification and attachment can be eradicated only through the merciful intercession of a preceptor. What obstructs us from the service of great souls is the mistaken notion that the body is itself the self. This misapprehension is the latch that tightens the doors of 'I' and 'mine,' which are drawn close to each other. Only when the teacher removes the latch are we freed from ahankāra and mamakāra; then we get an opportunity to serve great men. That is why the gōpikas ask the woman within to lift the latch.

This passage lends itself to another interpretation. Aspirants for attaining God consider appreciation of His beauty and cultivation of devotion to Him as essential; hence they feel no enthusiasm about serving great men. Thus God's beauty and devotion to Him are the two doors that come close and stand as an obstacle to the service of great men. But devotion to God finds fulfilment in the service of His devotees; and appreciation of God's beauty reaches perfection, only after seeing the serene and radiant forms of His devotees. It is only when we acquire this knowledge by the grace of the great sages that we correct ourselves and develop a taste for their service. The gōpikas who deem her to be āchārya urge her to remove the obstacle herself and create an opportunity for them to serve her.

As the mansion is made of gems, the people within it are visible to those outside it and *vice versa*. The gōpikas outside get no response to their prayer from the gōpika within, who still continues sleeping. They see her mother sitting beside her and urging her to respect their wishes and respond to them. She tells her that treating them with indifference amounting to mockery (as Draupadi treated Duryōdhana when he slipped into waters, unable to distinguish between land and water in the crystal mansion, Maya Sabha) is quite improper; and it is up to her to relieve them of their misery. Finding sympathy in the girl's mother they address her:

7. " *Māmīr avaḷai yeḷuppīrō* "
 "Aunt, rouse her."

Though our misery has failed to rouse her, you can manage to awaken her by your words of sympathy for us. 'Māmīr' is similar to 'swāmini,' (possessor)—an inseparable relationship that cannot be relinquished. Unless she instructs her daughter, the latter does not give up her tenacity. Here the mother stands for the knowledge that He alone is the means to attain Him and none else (ananyōpāyatva jñāna). Karmayōga is that in which all activities are consecrated to His service, against a background of discriminatory knowledge between self and body. This service is meant to please God; but is not a means to attaining Him. Jñānayōga lies in the knowledge of the true nature of self, that it belongs to Him and is dependent on Him; that, like the body, it carries out all the things entrusted to it by God and renders all the resulting credit to Him; and that it is to be enjoyed only by Him. From this knowledge comes love of God; and all the activities are undertaken for His sake only. But this Jñānayōga, too, is no means of attaining God. Bhaktiyōga consists in loving God and keeping Him constantly in mind. This helps to induce God's love for us; but it cannot become a direct means to attaining Him. To learn that God alone is the means to attain God is to possess the knowledge that all other means are no means at all and are to be rejected and all efforts given up. It is with that sure knowledge and abiding conviction (ananyōpāyatwa jñāna) that the gōpika within has lain on the couch, giving up all self-effort. But as a result of this knowledge, she should have also understood that, while effort for selfish ends is reprehensible, efforts to secure the ends of others are quite consistent with this knowledge. Any activity undertaken to help others will not be opposed to this faith in God as the means; on the contrary, it is in tune with it and helps to make it strong and steady. But this gōpika is in the initial stage of ananyōpāyatwa jñāna and so rejects *all* activity as contrary to her conviction; and she lies down without engaging in any activity. Her mother tries to persuade her, that to sympathise with and help those who, believing in Him as the means, are unable to keep steady but go out in search of Him in agony, is not opposed to her faith but is consistent with it. When the mother's attempt to rouse her daughter fails, the gōpikas feel hurt and ask:

8. *Un magal dān ūmaiṃ*

“Is your daughter dumb?” They say “*your* daughter,” in irritation. Can she not give a reply? Has any one kept her mouth shut? Is this the state that her knowledge that God alone is the means brought her into? While it rejects her adoption of any other means to attain Him, does it also preclude her from joining those who have the same conviction? Is this all that you have taught your daughter? Is it proper to remain deaf and unresponsive to us on the plea that she should not undertake any activity? This is not only not consistent with your faith but is quite opposed to it. We can quite understand that you should not respond to the enemies of spiritual experience. But should you refuse to speak to us who wish to attain Him?”

9. *aṇṇicceviṭṭ* ”

“Is she not only dumb but also deaf?

Is there any one there speaking into her ears, so as to make our words inaudible to her?” She is deeply engrossed in spiritual dialogue and as a result her throat gets hoarse. So she is unable to speak. That accounts for her dumbness. Having attained union with God, she is carrying on a tete-a-tete with Him; and so she is deaf to the words of others.

10. “*anandaḷ* ”

“Is she in such fatigue that she is incapacitated from any activity?” The gōpikas conjecture that her secret union with Kṛṣṇa has exhausted her. Otherwise, she would have risen in time and met them in response to their call. Her mind is fully engrossed with her experience. Even if she comes out of it, it takes sometime for the mind to comprehend external objects. They enquire whether she is in such a state.

11. “*ēmaṇṇerunduyil mandirappaṭṭāl* ”

“Is any guard restraining her from rising? Or has any one cast a spell on her to induce deep slumber?”

“Could it be that he who has chased sleep from us put her to sound sleep? Keeping watch over her, is he preventing her

from rising?" It is God who puts us to sleep and who wakes us up. Those who are with Him go to sleep; and those who are away from Him go without sleep. Whether we are asleep or awake, He is there keeping watch. That is, the Supreme Self is always in union with the individual selves. But when the individual selves experience that union, they refrain from outward activities as in sleep. When the souls go to sleep thus, God keeps watch over them. The gōpikas enquire whether the girl is in that state.

The gōpikas are aware of the mischievous pranks of Kṛṣṇa. He is in the habit of meeting girls without the knowledge of others, of keeping them silent under threat, of preventing them from responding to calls from others, of keeping them close in his embrace and preventing them by looks from rising or speaking, even if they are prepared to do so. That is why they raise all those doubts about the girl within. Could any one have cast a spell on her to induce deep slumber? Kṛṣṇa's complexion and looks are themselves strong sedatives. Such deep slumber cannot possess the girl unless Kṛṣṇa has cast the spell of his looks on her. That is how the gōpikas spell out their view of the situation.

Those who know the meaning of the word 'Namaḥ' give up all their activities and resemble those who are in sleep. This girl has understood in full the meaning of this word. 'Namaḥ' means 'I do not belong to myself, I am not independent'. Thus she knows the real nature of her self. This word also signifies that God alone is the means and that all self-efforts are unavailing as means to attain Him. It also indicates that all activities are to be consecrated to Him, and that the goal is to render such service. The girl within has thoroughly assimilated this mantra (ritualistic incantation) and has reached a state in which all activity is suspended as in sleep.

The mother has heard the words of the gōpikas who have come to rouse her daughter. She replies: "This is not the way of awakening her. If you do know her nature, you will have to adopt a different method, that of glorifying the names of the Lord. Only the names of God, like a shower of cool water, percolate into her mind and refresh it and bring her back to consciousness". Even those who know that God alone is the means, succumb to the influence of the glorification of God's names and slide from inner experience

into outer consciousness. This is how they wake up and become aware of the outside world. Taking the cue, the gōpikas begin glorifying His names.

12. *“Māmāyan, Mādavan, Vaigundan, enṇenṇu.nāmam palavum navinṇu ēiḍrempāvāy*

They sing glorifying His names, among which they mention three which bring out some of His auspicious attributes: “the Mighty Wizard”, “the Lord of Lakṣmi” and “the Resident of the Heavenly Abode” (Vaikuṇṭha vāsa)."

When they glorify “the mighty Wizard”, they call to mind the mysterious power employed by the Supreme Being in creating this universe. They also recollect what miraculous power is evidenced when the Transcendental Supreme has chosen to descend to the earth in the easily-accessible form of Kṛṣṇa. Māya is Prakṛti, Primal Nature. The Supreme Self, by His volition, causes the primordial substance to undergo mysterious changes, so as to yield bodies that fit in with the sum-total of the works of individual selves. ‘Māya’ also means the power of God’s wish (iccha) which takes the form of volition (sankalpa). It is this wonderful power which has brought the universe into existence. The Supreme who has no birth takes birth; the Supreme, who is the Lord commanding all, submits to the commands of others; the Supreme who is changeless takes a form and undergoes changes like birth and growth—and all this happens because of the power of His Volition or Will. And that power is called Māya, and He is born because of it. He is not born like us as a consequence of accumulated works. Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa elucidates the same idea in the Bhagavadgīta—

“Ajōpisannavya yātmā Bhūtānāmiśvarōpisan
Prakṛtim swāmadhiṣṭāya sambhavāmyātmamāyayā”

“Though I am Beginningless and Changeless and though I am the Lord and Ordainer of all elements, I take birth, of my own will, without giving up my real nature.”

This Māya takes the form of Primal Nature, which is compounded of the three fundamental qualities, and is under His control. How long it should pervade us and when it should

release us, depend on His will. Those who seek refuge at His feet will be able to overcome it. Because He has such mysterious power, He is hailed as the Mighty Wizard. The mysteries in the Kṛṣṇa incarnation are indefinable and multifarious. The all-knowing Supreme behaves like an ignoramus. Crawling in the gem-studded portico, he tries to catch his own reflection. Frightened by his mother's threats, he weeps bitterly. He eats a small lump of earth, in a childish prank, but opening his mouth, he exhibits the whole universe. Taking note of mysteries like these, the gōpikas address him as "the Mighty Wizard," "the great wielder of mysterious power."

The Transcendental Supreme, who is the Cause of the universe, has come down and made himself easily accessible because of our mother, Mahālakṣmi. He is praised as "Mādhava", because intimate association with and personal service to Lakṣmi have enabled Him to imbibe the quality of easy accessibility. He is the Lord of Śrī—Śrīyaḥpati; it is this position as Lord of Lakṣmi that establishes Him as the Transcendental Phenomenon (Paratattva). The footprints of Lakṣmi on his bosom identify him as the Supreme. Making this point, Śrī Bhattar sings: "Vēdāntāḥ tatva chintāṁ murabhi durasi yat pāda chihnai staranti." Puruṣa-sūkta also mentions that the lordship of Lakṣmi is used as a proof in determining who the Supreme is. "Hṛīchatē Lakṣmīśchapatnyau", The gōpikas thus glorify both His transcendental stature and easy accessibility and His close kinship with Lakṣmi, to which He owes both these qualities. And as he is the Lord of not merely this special glory but of perennial splendour, he is addressed as "the Resident of Vaikunṭha," an inmate of the Heavenly Abode.

"Though He resides in Vaikunṭha, (Heavenly Abode), He is so high-minded so to feel concerned for those who remain fettered in this magnificent world of His sport (Līla Vibhūti). To those who serve Him, He grants admission into His abode. Such a One has descended amongst us as the son of Nanda. He it is to

whom we owe our adoration and service.” Thus they hold Kṛṣṇa in reverence as the Transcendental Phenomenon; they feel happy that he is easily accessible to them; they glorify his auspicious attributes with suitable names. Hearing these praises of the Lord, the girl within, who has been hitherto lost in her isolated personal experience, emerges from it. Now she comes to a state of mind which gives her no peace, unless she joins her companions and enjoys spiritual experience in company with them.



PĀŚURAM X

PREFACE.

After spending a sleepless night owing to separation from Kṛṣṇa, the gōpikas start for the place of ritual, awakening their friends on the way. It appears strange that only ten happen to be asleep. That their sleep is not tāmasic sleep of the common people is clear from the different modes adopted in awakening each one of them. Theirs is sāttvic sleep caused by intense God-consciousness. The gōpikas awaken such devotees in order to turn their attention towards themselves and win their special grace, so that they may earn fitness for spiritual experience. The means adopted for attaining God appear to be different from one another. The Bhagavadgīta enunciates niškāma karma, (Desireless action), ātmaswarūpajñāna (knowledge of the true nature of self) and Bhagavad bhakti (devotion to God) as means to attain God. "Swakarmaṇā tamabhyarchya siddhim vindati mānavaḥ. Man realises fulfilment by worshipping God according to the mode of karma prescribed for him. Sarvam jñāna plavē-naiva vṛjinam santariṣyasi: ~~In~~ the ship of knowledge you can cross the ocean of sin which ~~stands~~ as a barrier to the attainment of God.

Bhaktiā tvananyayā śakyaḥ ahamēvam vidhōrjuna
Jñātum draṣṭumcha tattvēna pravēṣṭuncha parantapa;

I am the indwelling Soul of the Universe. You can attain me only by undistracted and single-minded devotion. Devotion alone is the instrument to know me, to see me and to enter into me." In this way, we learn from the Gīta that works (karma), knowledge (jñāna) and devotion (bhakti) are the various means for God-attainment. In addition to these, knowledge of the secret of incarnation is enunciated as a means in Chapter IV of the Gīta. Again, in Chapter XV, it is declared that to know and to adore the nature and form of the Supreme Person (Puruṣōttama) leads to God-attainment. After expatiating upon all these modes

to attain God, Śrī Kṛṣṇa declares finally that He alone is the means to attaining Him: *Sarva dharmān parityajya māmēkam śaraṇam vraja*. Those who abide in God as the only effective means are adepts in their choice, in as much as that is the means that is ever available and is not dependent upon their effort and is certain to lead to fulfilment. These are the *siddhōpāya niṣṭas*. Those who adopt means other than God to attain Him count upon self-effort to reach Him, and therefore they are called *sādhōpāya niṣṭas*.

So far four girls—all strong believers in God as the means to attaining Him—have been awakened. According to Vaiṣṇava tradition, all these are believed to be Āḷwārs who have reached fulfilment in spiritual experience through the grace of God. The first is Sarōyōgi (Poyigai Āḷwār); the second Bhūtayōgi (Pūdatta Āḷwār) and the third, Mahāyōgi (Pēyi Āḷwār). In rousing them, the gōpikas refer to the brightening of the eastern sky as a sign of dawn on the third day (Pāṣuram VIII). That brightening of the eastern sky indicates a mysterious incident taking place at the time when the three yōgis meet in the village of Tirukkōvalūr. Sarōyōgi is lying in a small room one night; the sky threatens heavy shower and Bhūtayōgi arrives and asks for shelter. The room has space enough for one man to lie down. But Sarōyōgi admits the visitor; and the two adjust themselves by sitting in the room. Presently, Mahāyōgi turns up and seeks quarter. All the three then adjust themselves in the small room by standing. Rejoicing that all the three great souls can be met together at one and the same place Śrīmannārāyaṇa enters their midst. As the three wonder why they feel cramped for space, they see a bright light and in it Śrīmannārāyaṇa Himself. The three devotees then sing the benediction. 'The light that appeared when these three devotees met' is presented in the reference to the brightening of the eastern sky in the eighth Pāṣuram. In Pāṣuram IX a gōpika aspiring for self-knowledge and reaching the stage of complete self-possession and serene bliss in God (*Vaṣikāravastha*) is described. All her senses appear dormant and she is sound asleep on a soft couch in a gem-studded room, amidst the glitter of burning wicks and the fragrance of scented incense. In the second chapter of *Bhagavad-Gīta*, the four stages of one who is established in wisdom "Sthitaprajña," are presented in four stanzas beginning

with "Prajahāti yadā kāmān". These four stages are: Undisturbed serenity in the bliss of God after overcoming desires and their latent tendencies (Vaśīkārāvastha); 2. Undistracted contemplation on God (Ēkēndriyāvastha); 3. Absolute disinterestedness in things non-spiritual (Vyatirēkāvastha) 4. Complete withdrawal of senses from their objects (Yatamanāvastha). These states resemble sleep. Even those who have had God-experience pass through these stages as their minds are engrossed in the subject of God. From Pāsuram IX to Pāsuram XII, these four stages are elucidated in the women that lie asleep. In Pāsuram IX, the gōpika ignores all the pleasures that surround her and keeps her mind fixed on the enjoyment of God-union. Such is the state reached by Ālwar Bhaktisāra; and it is he that the gōpikas presume to have roused in that Pāsuram. Bhaktisāra is a great sage. Ever immersed in God-consciousness he has renounced all other means of attaining Him. He has little interest in securing mysterious powers or exercising them. It is said that, hearing about his strong abidance in devotion to God, Īśwara and his Consort Pārvati appear before him; and announcing their identity offer to him a gift of his choice. As he has firmly believed that nothing other than God is desirable, he playfully requests them to grant that the thread with which he is stitching his mattress might pass easily through the eye of the needle. This indicates how strong is his abidance in God as the only means to attain Him, and how firm his rejection of all other means. Though he possesses all the supernatural accomplishments of a seasoned yōgi, he has never exhibited them. On one occasion a siddha, a man of occult powers, comes to him and offers him an alchemic tabloid (rasagūlika) which has power to transmute base things into gold. Bhaktisāra rejects the offer; he scrubs his body and makes over that mass of dirt to the siddha adding that it too can produce gold. On putting that dirt to test, it yields gold; and the siddha is humbled. An old woman pleases Bhaktisāra with her devout services to him; and in consequence she acquires renewed youth. The king, who marries her out of his love for her, wishes to have a renewal of youth for himself and desires that Bhaktisāra should be brought to his court. But a disciple Kaṇikannar makes a submission that Bhaktisāra is not prepared to go there. When requested to write verses in praise of the king, the sage refuses. The king is provoked; and he orders expulsion of Bhaktisāra from his capital

of Kāñchīpura. As the sage moves out, the Deity in the temple also moves along. The king repents for his folly and entreats him to stay. The sage relents and stays there; and the Deity also remains there. As the Deity there has done what he is told to do by Āḷwār Bhaktisāra, the Perumaḷ is called Yadhōktakāri. Again, it is reported that when Bhaktisāra is making a pradakṣina of the village of Kumbhakoṇam, the presiding Deity in the temple, who is in a lying posture, slowly raises his head in his eagerness to see the sage. Noticing this strange phenomenon, the people there ascribe it to the mysterious power of Bhaktisāra. Ever since, the image of the Deity in the temple, who is in the lying posture, has shown an elevation of the head. Though accomplished in mysterious occult-powers, Bhaktisāra appears as a simple ignorant man engaged in stitching patches in his mattress. But he is really absorbed in spiritual experience; and it is assumed that he is awakened in the previous Pāśuram.

Those who pin their faith to the ready availability of God as means to attaining Him, do not undertake any ritual as an aid; they enjoy the bliss of attaining Him solely through His grace. One among such sages is Nammāḷwār. Without having passed through spiritual discipline, Nammāḷwār has enjoyed full realisation in the same way as aspirants who undergo such discipline do. From birth he has fallen into concentrated meditation (yōga sādhana). "Thiruvai-Moḷi," an outpouring of his heart, has become a veritable refuge to those who surrender to God. This is the first and foremost poem of high literary value (mahā kāvya) that has sprouted forth in Tamil language. This Āḷwār will be awakened in Pāśuram XI.

The girl to be awakened today is the next-door neighbour to Kṛṣṇa. A single wall separates them. By making an opening in the wall or by jumping over it, Kṛṣṇa goes into her house and joins her company to give her pleasure. She does not by herself seek Kṛṣṇa; she is sure that he will himself go to her. Hence she sleeps with a light, disburdened heart. The gōpikas outside know that all the tribulations they suffer for Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa himself undergoes for her. And so they conclude that she is sleeping because she has already enjoyed union with him. Were it not so, she should have, like others, started out for the ritual. It is that girl that is roused from sleep this day.

God is the embodiment of Bliss. Some make efforts to attain this Bliss. Some others refrain from self-effort, believing that no effort of theirs can secure it, and that God alone should bestow it; and so they await His grace to descend upon them. The Upaniṣad countenances both these modes: (1) "Ānandam Brahmaṇō vidvān: Those who *know* that God is Bliss". Those who adopt this dictum make efforts to attain that Bliss. (2) Ēṣa hyēvānanda yāti "that Supreme Self makes us enjoy the bliss." Those who stick to this belief give up all self-effort and wait in the hope that He will bring that bliss to them. The gōpika to be awakened today has faith in the second dictum. She is not worried whether her belief bears fruit or not, since whatever profits or losses ensue belong to God and not to her. In this state, the other senses cease to work; the mind only is active. This state is called the state of concentrated contemplation (Ēkēndriyāvastha). There is no obstacle for the Supreme Self to enter into that mind clandestinely. That is why they have already declared that this gōpika is Kṛṣṇa's next-door neighbour. In this state of mind, even if success eludes and sorrow overtakes, she feels no exasperation. Her mind enjoys perfect equanimity; because it is not concerned with success or failure. To possess her is a gain to the Lord and not to her; hence, it is the Lord who shall feel the exasperation for failing to do so. Even if she attains the pleasure of God-experience, she does not develop attachment to it. The pleasure is His. Why then should she develop mamakāra for it? Such is the ultimate limit of entire dependence on Him (pāratantrya parākāṣṭha) that the gōpika, Kṛṣṇa's next-door neighbour, has reached. It is that gōpika that is to be awakened today.

*Nōṟṟu ccuvarkkam puguginṟa ammanāy
 māṟṟa mum tāṟārō vāṣal tīṟavādār
 nāṟṟa ttulāy muḍi nārāyaṇan; nammāl
 porṟa pparai tarum puṇṇiyanāl; paṇḍorunāl
 kūṟṟa ttin vāy viḷṇda kumbakaraṇanum
 tōṟṟu munakke perunduyil tāntandānō
 āṟṟa anandatu ḍaiyāy! aruṇigalame!
 tēṟṟa māy vandu tīṟavelōrempāvāy.*

Summary.

O fortunate girl, you who have completed the rite before our arrival and as a result experienced happiness! Won't you speak to us, even if you do not open the door? Nārāyaṇa, whose crown is decorated with garlands of fragrant Tulasi, is so generous a benefactor that He bestows on us, who have nothing of our own, the desired objective of 'Paṇai,' for merely singing His benediction. He has one day cast Kumbhakarna into the jaws of death. Could it be that demon has been defeated by you in a contest of sleep and has surrendered his rich possession of sound sleep to you? O dear one, whom dense drowsiness never seems to leave, you, who happen to be the crown-gem (Śirōbhūṣaṇa) of us all, get up from sleep, shake off your sleepiness and come and open the door. Open your mouth and speak. Remove the veil and disclose yourself to us.

Commentary.

1. *Nōṛṇuc cuvarkkam puguginṭa ammanāy*

“O dear girl, you who have finished the rite and gained entry into heaven.” Having been separated from Kṛṣṇa this girl has intended to perform the rite along with her friends. But she enjoys sound sleep like one that has finished the rite and obtained the fruit thereof. Surprised at her state, the gōpikas taunt her: “Hallo, have you completed the rite so soon? You appear to be enjoying the fruit thereof!” They guess that such is her expertness in matters concerning union with Kṛṣṇa that Kṛṣṇa, who cannot be attained by aspirants till after they complete the rite, must have been moved to perform the rite himself so as to be united with her. If it be not so, it is not possible for her to fall into that sound sleep. She has clung to the ever-available source of believing that Kṛṣṇa alone is the means to attaining him; she has learnt that there is nothing for her to do towards that end. Those who know that Kṛṣṇa is both the means and the end really understand the nature of Kṛṣṇa. Such people have nothing to do, nothing to achieve.

“Yēcha Vēdavidō viprāḥ yēchādhyātmavidō Janāḥ

Tē vadanti mahātmānam Kṛṣṇam dharmam sanātanam”

“Brāhmins learned in Vēdic Scriptures, and sages ripe with spiritual experience, have alike declared that the high-souled Kṛṣṇa is the eternal Dharma.” Dharma is means, method. Works, knowledge and devotion are means to attain God. True; but they are not available to us always. The only means that remains close to us at all times is God himself. Those who know Him to be the only Saviour cannot put forth efforts to save themselves. Once the knowledge that he belongs to God dawns upon him, the devotee gives up all effort as there is nothing that he has to earn for himself.

“Sarvē vēdāḥ sarva vēdyāḥ saśāstrāḥ
 Sarvē yajñāḥ sarva ijjāścha Kṛṣṇaḥ
 Viduḥ Kṛṣṇam Brahmanāstatwa tō yē
 Tēṣām rājan sarva yajñā ssamastāḥ.”

“All the Vēdas, all the Scriptures, all the desired objectives including the highest ends, all the sacrificial rites, whether for general good or for personal gain—are Kṛṣṇa himself. Those who really know Kṛṣṇa may be deemed to have performed all the sacrificial rites.” As this girl really knows the nature of Kṛṣṇa, she clings to him as the only means, and lies down making no effort, as though she has the desired end in her grasp.

To say that people who cling to God as the only means give up all effort, does not mean that they are devoid of works or knowledge or devotion. They perform karmas, but do them in a spirit of consecration to God. They possess Self-knowledge. And that knowledge keeps alive their kinship with God, namely, that they belong to Him and that they together form the body to Him to reside in. They have devotion, too. But it never becomes an instrument. Devotion takes the form of relish for Kṛṣṇa and of eager enthusiasm to attain him. Possessing works, knowledge and devotion and yet rejecting them as implements or means, and strictly abiding in God as the only means—this is the rite that the gōpika has completed. She has lain down like one that has nothing else to do; as one that has achieved what is wanted. ‘Kṛta Kṛtyas’ are those who have accomplished the tasks that they have set before themselves. The nature of such people is elucidated in Chapter XV Puruṣōttama Prāpti yōga of the Bhagavadgīta: “Yō māmēva masammūḍhaḥ Jānāti puruṣōttamam

sa sarva vidbhajatimām sarvabhāvēna Bhārata: He who knows me as the Supreme Person in this way, knows all and adores me as the Universal Spirit in whatever way one looks at me.” “Ētaḥ buddhvā buddhimān syāt kṛta-kṛtyaścha Bhārata: He who knows this scripture which deals with the nature of the Supreme Person becomes wise and achieves what he desires.” To attain the Supreme Person, one has to understand His nature. Before one knows It, one has to understand the nature of the tree of Samsāra, of bondage to non-self, which too emanates from the Supreme. Then one has to learn the nature of the pure self. It is necessary to understand how the Supreme supports and nourishes in every way the entire universe, sentient and insentient objects. The self which remains in bondage in this world is the Kṣara-puruṣa; the self which gains liberation from it is the akṣara puruṣa. The Supreme Person (Puruṣōttama) is different from the kṣara-puruṣa and the akṣara-puruṣa categories of self; He is above them all. He is the Immanent and the Transcendent. To attain the Puruṣōttama, one has to pass through the spiritual discipline of knowing the real nature of Primal Nature (Prakṛti), of the Individual Self (Jīva) and of the Supreme Lord (Īswara). One who succeeds in this task has accomplished his objective. Those who understand the true nature of the Supreme Person regard the sentient and insentient objects as belonging to Him and dependent on Him. And hence they have nothing to do independently to attaining Him; and so they cling to Him as the only means to it. To get this conviction is the fulfilment of all endeavour. The gōpika to be awakened today is in this state of conviction. Addressing her as “the girl who has completed the rite and reached heaven” is the same as calling her ‘the girl who believing Him to be the only means has attained Him.’

‘Swarga,’ or ‘Heaven’ means ‘Sukha’ or ‘Happiness.’ Lord Kṛṣṇa is himself sākṣāt sukha or veritable happiness. ‘Kṛṣṇā’ means ‘Infinite Bliss.’ To be with him is to be in heaven. When Sita accompanies Śrī Rāma into the woods, she declares: “Yastvayā saha saṁswargaḥ nirayō yastvayā vinā: To be with you is heaven. To be separated from you is hell.” Thus ‘heaven’ means attainment of God. Hence the gōpikas address their companion as the girl who has attained and is experiencing God. To show that this experience of hers is eternal—not temporary nor intermittent,

nor to be momentarily enjoyed and then discarded—they use the present tense ‘pugu ginṛa; experiencing.’ Those who have the conviction that He alone is the means of attaining Him cut off what ought to be given up, namely, the bondage of birth-and-death; and they abide for ever in God-consciousness without any intermission whatsoever. That happiness is available only on earth; and this girl is enjoying it. So they address her as ‘Ammā; ‘Mother,’ and plead for her intercession: “You are our saviour. You are competent to secure the attainment of God for the entire group of gōpikas.”

2. *Māṇṇam Tārāḍ vāṣal tīravādār*

“You have not opened the door; let it be so; won’t you speak to us? The gōpika within is beside herself in bliss on seeing the company of her friends; and she remains mute as she finds no words to express herself. When Śrī Ānjanēya brings the tidings of Śrī Rāma’s victory to Sīta, Sīta is unable to utter a word under the startling thrill of excessive pleasure: “Praharṣē ṇāvaruddhā sā vyājahāra nakinchana.” In the same way, this gōpika remains mute thrilled with exhilaration on seeing her friends at her house. But they misunderstand her. Not knowing her mind, they persist in asking: “Won’t you speak to us?”

Imagining that she is enjoying union with Kṛṣṇa, they concede that opening the door may come in the way of her happiness; but they fail to understand what prevents her from speaking to them from within. Aspirants for God-experience should hear the words that fall spontaneously from the lips of devotees out of the fulness of their spiritual experiences, before they wish to have a glimpse of God. To those who have denied God and have thus lost their very existence, the precious words of the devotees impart a new life. Until we approach the saints and earn their favour and hear their words and feel happy, we cannot get rid of our ego. This ego is the door that bars us from coming closer to the saints. It is only after hearing and assimilating their counsel that the ego turns aside and enables us to see them. That is why the gōpikas plead: “You may not open the door of our ego which bars us from seeing you. Let it be so. But will you not preserve our existence by enabling us to hear your words?”

Languishing in agony on account of separation from Sita, Śrī Rāmachandra wishes to know from Ānjanēya what words are spoken by Śita, so that they may sustain his life during separation:—

“Madhurā madhurālāpā ki māha mama bhāminī :

Tell me what delicious words have been uttered by Sita who knows how to speak with sweetness.” Thus has Rāma prayed to Ānjanēya. Thus what sustains life till we have the darśan is the sweet and precious word of Śrī (Śrīsūkti). Hearing their words and guessing that the gōpikas are suspecting Kṛṣṇa's presence there, the girl from within replies: “Kṛṣṇa is not here. Why do you speak so?” Then they reply: “You cannot hide that nature of his, even if you wish to. The fragrance of *tulasi* is spreading out.”

3. *Nārattulāy muḍi Nārāyaṇa*

“Fragrant *tulasi* adorns the crown of Nārāyaṇa.” The fragrance of *Tulasi* cannot be suppressed, even if you try to hide it. If He but embraces once, the sweet smell clings. Any number of baths fail to wash it away. That smell is wafted from your house. How can denial of his presence fit in with fact? Those whose minds are redolent with the perfume of fondness for God cannot, like *Tulasi*, hide their fragrance, even if they wish to do so. Knowing this, the girls conclude that Kṛṣṇa must be there, as the sweet *Tulasi* scent spreads from there. How can Kṛṣṇa have entered when the doors are barred? To meet this doubt, they refer to him as ‘Nārāyaṇa.’ When the individual self enters a physical body, the Supreme Self also enters making the individual self His body. Though the Supreme Self does not appear to be present, He is immanent in all objects having a form and a name. He permeates, as well, those who do not love Him. If those who love Him wish to see Him, He manifests Himself then and there. He need not come from any other place for it. Such is Nārāyaṇa the gōpikas say: “We know how Kṛṣṇa enters in. If you say he does not allow you to speak, we reply that he is not so harsh; he is by nature a benefactor (*Dhārmika*).

4. *Nammāl porṟappaṟai taruṁ Puṇṇiyaṇāl*

“He is such a generous benefactor that he bestows ‘Paṟai’ on us, the moment we sing his benediction.”

“We are without any possessions; we do not have adequate means to attain God. Still he is so generous as to give us an opportunity to seek his shelter. He will not bar you from speaking to us. He will not consider us as people of low birth nor as people lacking in proper conduct. He will give succour to all who sing his benediction, whoever they be. Gōpikas though we are, the moment we sing his benediction, he gives us promptly the ‘paṟai,’ the musical instrument required for our ritual. Such is his liberal generosity. He is the embodiment of Merit, of Goodness (Puṇyamūrti). In fact, he is himself Merit. ‘Kṛṣṇam Dharmam Sanātanaṁ’: Kṛṣṇa himself is the Eternal Virtue and, Righteousness (Sanātana Dharma). Such being Kṛṣṇa’s nature, your closeness to him will not help you to hold him from receiving us. We pray, please do speak.” Still the girl within makes no response. Then they taunt her: “Is this sleep of yours the gift of Kumbhakarṇa?” Himself the embodiment of merit, God may some times become the cause of death to some people. It is their misfortune. A benefactor may get a tank dug, so that its waters may serve the needs of people for bathing and drinking. This very tank may be the cause of death of an unlucky man who foolishly goes deep into its waters and gets drowned. To those who are free from ill-will, God Himself becomes their merit and enables them to attain Him. He Himself stimulates a taste in them for Him. He Himself becomes a means to them so that they may attain Him. Finally, He allows Himself to be attained by them. He helps them in all the ways in which merit earned by them will have assisted them. That is why He is Himself Merit.’ Even after reaching such a Meritorious Being, (Puṇyamūrti), people die out of their feeling of hatred. Death is the outcome of their folly. Śrī Rāma declares that he will give succour even to Rāvaṇa, should he seek it. Rāmāyaṇa says that “Rāma has great kindness even for his enemies.” (Ripūṇa mapi vatsalaḥ). The Gīta declares: “Suhṛdam sarvabhūtānām: The Supreme is the friend of all elements.” Thus Kṛṣṇa is the embodiment of merit; in fact, is Merit itself. Such Merit becomes the cause of Kumbhakarṇa’s death in the person of Rāma. Such Merit, again, is today dis-

tancing you from us. Remember the example of Kumbhakarṇa. This attitude is not proper for you."

5. Paṇḍorunāḷ

Kūṟṟattin vāy viḷṇḍa Kumbakaraṇanum

Tōṟṟumunakkē perunduyil tān tandānō

"Could it be that in the past Kumbhakarṇa has suffered defeat at your hands and surrendered his long sleep to you before falling into the jaws of death?"

"Ages ago, there lived a demon Kumbhakarṇa who, like you, used to sleep soundly without trying to wake up. Could it be that you had defeated him in a sleeping contest and taken away *his* sleep also, as a prize of victory? Kumbhakarṇa died at the hands of Rāmachandra, who is the epitome of Puṇya. In the same way as an insect falls by itself into a flaming wick (which is meant to give light) and dies, Kumbhakarṇa himself dashes against Śrī Rāma and brings about his own death. You have won his sleep as prize in the contest: and thus your sleep has become a Big Sleep, longer and denser. The Demon used to wake up at least once in six months. But you seem to go on sleeping as long as Time lasts. Kumbhakarṇa helped in keeping only Sīta away from Rāma. But you have a higher distinction in obstructing so many of us from reaching Kṛṣṇa." That is how the gōpikas taunt her and her sleep. But this sleep is what yōgis attain to. While the worldly men are awake, the yōgis go to sleep. The objects of temporal enjoyment, after which worldly men hanker, appear dark as sleep to the yōgi. The yōgi keeps awake only in matters pertaining to God; and they are dark as sleep to us. This girl is asleep, in the sense that she is averse to worldly objects; and awake in the sense that she is alert to spiritual experience.

The dense slumber of Kumbhakarṇa owes its origin to his inertia (tāmasic nature). The equally sound sleep of the gōpika owes its origin to her sātत्वic nature, tendency to purity. That is why the gōpikas characterise her sleep as 'bigger' than that of Kumbhakarṇa. The gōpika has rejected inert slumber; in fact, she has transformed it into spiritual experience and is perfectly immersed in God-union. The gōpikas feel hurt that she has not chosen to come out, although she has attained such a spiritual state.

The word 'Kumbhakarṇa' is pronounced in Tamil as "Kumba karaṇa." "Kumbakarṇa" means 'one whose origin is kumba or pot.' Such a one is Agastya. The gōpikas enquire whether it is Agastya who has given her such sleep. Agastya's greatness is well-known in three of his remarkable exploits. He has lowered the Vindhya so as not to obstruct the march of the sun; he has collected the whole sea into his palm and drunk it in a single draught; he has digested Vātāpi, the demon who is death to all. The gōpika here seems to possess these three mysterious powers under the gracious influence of Agastya. Ego is the Vindhya. It obstructs the rise of the knowledge of God in us. It is necessary therefore to suppress it, so that knowledge may radiate without break. It is only then that opportunities for spiritual experience present themselves. Agastya's second achievement is his drinking the entire ocean in a small draught. This is as much as to say that he has assimilated the ocean of learning that is contained in all the scriptures, so that it may serve as means to spiritual experience. Spiritual experience can be reached only through scriptural knowledge. The third feat that has contributed to Agastya's greatness is his digesting Vātāpi, the very embodiment of Death. Those who attain spiritual experience keep the mind constantly engaged in meditation on God; they are ever alert, lest they should lapse into forgetting God. Break in meditation constitutes death. God-experience can be accomplished or attained, only when one overcomes this death or lapse in meditation; and possesses an abundance of scriptural knowledge to feed and sustain meditation without intercession. This gōpika has conquered her ego; she has assimilated scriptural knowledge; she has mastered the exercise of an unbroken meditation on God; thus she has attained complete union with Him. Her sound sleep indicates her union with Kṛṣṇa. The gōpikas presume that, because of her acquisition of Agastya's powers, she has fallen into such sound sleep. Feeling miserable at being compared to the demon, Kumbhakarṇa, the gōpika shakes off her sleep and comes out of her trance, crying "Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa"; and appears before her companions. They feel happy to see her as she rises; and she is as drowsy as people who have just risen from sleep.

6. *Aṟṟa anandaluḍai yāy:*

They accost her as "the one who has the drowsiness of deep slumber." "It is enough for us to have witnessed the way you

have risen from sleep. To go to Kṛṣṇa and awaken him does not appear so very essential. We deem it a privilege to have seen you as you wake up from sleep." The gōpika is in that stage in which those who are in a spiritual trance (samādhi) transit into the consciousness of the external world. Though they have come out of their spiritual experience, it takes some time before they can participate in worldly affairs. That particular state of suspended animation is itself an ornament to them. On seeing her in that condition, the gōpikas address her thus:

7. *Aruṅgalamē*

"O rare ornament." "You may not do anything at all. Your very presence with us gives our company a gem of a leader; and our whole group shines on that account. Make us shine with the effulgence of your knowledge; and we pray, 'lead us forth.' Moved by this invitation and by the agony behind it, the girl within makes haste to come out. The gōpikas notice her eager solicitude for them and tell her:

8. *teṛṇamāy vandu tiṛa vē.ḍrempāvāy*

"Steady yourself and then come and open the door." "Do not rush out and be seen by others in the state in which you are, with your dress and ornaments in pell-mell and with the signs of union with Kṛṣṇa patently visible. Take time and make adjustments in outfit and then open the door." Those who wake up from spiritual experience and become just conscious of the outer world should not hasten to act immediately in worldly affairs; because, at times, such activity leads to danger. The gōpikas feel that her rushing out in that state is disastrous to them and their cause. So they counsel caution; and desire her to steady herself before she ventures out.

When Lakṣmaṇa goes to Kiṣkindha in a frenzy of anger at Sugrīva's remissness, Tāra who has been engaged in love-sport with Sugrīva, rushes out as she is, to cajole and pacify him. Sā prākhalantī mada viḥvalākṣī. She comes out drunk and drowsy, with unsteady steps and half-shut and rolling eyes. To pacify Lakṣmaṇa's ire, it becomes necessary for Tāra to exhibit herself in that drowsy state of self-indulgence. But here, the gōpikas

desire that their friend should not rush out like Tāra. They have come there in painful eagerness to solicit God-experience through her. And so they request her to come out, only after she resumes complete consciousness of the external world and is competent to attend to worldly matters. “*Open* the door; *open* your mouth so that your words may reach us; open (lift) the veil so as to make visible your body that has lost itself in the bliss of spiritual experience.” They make use of the word ‘open’ to suit all the three actions. Those who have spiritual experiences come into the world in a manner that incurs no blame from the people; and that helps to uplift the eager souls from the agony of depression. Seeing them in flesh and blood, and hearing their words of counsel, pave the way to the attainment of God. In this Pāsuram, the gōpika that is awakened is in a state of undistracted contemplation, her senses remaining inert and her mind fully surrendered to God, in an abiding conviction that He alone is the means to attaining Him.



PĀŚURAM XI

PREFACE.

The gōpikas have the conviction that God is both the means and the end. Those girls who are being awakened have firm faith in God's instrumentality in bringing them to Himself. The gōpika to be awakened in this Pāśuram is very handsome in every respect. She comes of a good family; she has beauty of form and figure; she is exemplary in character. She has earned the compliments of all in the village, in the same way as Kṛṣṇa who is welcome everywhere. She is worthy of union with her lord. She sees no point in her performing any rite to attain Kṛṣṇa. Rather, it is for Kṛṣṇa to undertake such penance to have her. The elders in her family strictly abide in the performance of duties. They follow the injunction of Gīta that performance of works, congenial to one's own nature, yields great good. Looking after cattle with care is the obligation of their community. Performance of works is no obstacle to attaining God. Even after acquiring knowledge which is required to attain God, performance of works cannot be dispensed with.

*"Yataḥ pravṛttirbhūtānām yēna sarvavidam tatam
Swakarmaṇā tamabhyarchya siddhim vindati mānavaḥ."*

"Man reaches fulfilment by worshipping, with works, that Supreme Self who pervades the whole universe and by whom all elements are enabled to carry on their activities." To know that the Supreme is the cause and the pervader of the universe, is to understand the real nature of God. With the acquisition of this knowledge, the spirit of independence perishes, because the self shines forth as the body of the Supreme Self and is under His control. Once this happens, the self performs works with the conviction that the Supreme alone, for His own pleasure, causes the self, who is His body, to do them. Karma thus performed becomes consecrated service to Him. Whatever results flow from these deeds, good or bad, concern the Supreme and not the self. So he does not appreciate them; nor does he denounce them. This state is

an aspect of sthitaprajñāvastha (steady establishment in wisdom) called Vyatirēkāvastha (complete disinterestedness in things non-spiritual).

*“Yassarvatrā nabhisnēhaḥ tattat prāpya śubhāśubham
nābhinandati nadvēṣṭi tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā.”*

“That one is firmly established in wisdom who has given up attachment, who does not admire the good when it smiles on him and who does not denounce the bad when it frowns on him.”

The gōpika of this Pāsuram is born in a family, the head of which is known for his strict adherence to his natural obligations (swadharmanirata). His duties consist in tending the cows and drawing their milk; and facing their opponents and overcoming them. But while discharging these duties, he takes care to see that no blame sticks to him. This is karmayōga: “Yōgaḥ karmasu kauśalam; To perform the task with skill is what makes it Yōga;” and the skill lies in doing a thing in such a way that its result does not stick to the doer. The aspirant who seeks liberation (mumukṣu) continues to perform karma even after acquiring knowledge. The liberated person also performs works. But as these are undertaken as acts of worship of God, they will not yield any fruit; on the other hand, they lend support to spiritual experience. Karma does not become a bondage when a person gives up the notion that he is doing it and renounces attachment to the fruits thereof. The karmayōgi who knows this secret will also have knowledge and devotion. Knowledge of the real nature of self eliminates attachment to the fruits of action as also the idea of being its doer. Devotion lends relish to the performance of karma in a spirit of consecration. Thus, though he possesses both knowledge and devotion he does not renounce action. As this gōpika is born in such a family (of karmayōgis) she is described as a great beauty in this Pāsuram. The party awakens today such a beautiful girl, who feels certain that Kṛṣṇa himself will go to her. Her sleep is nothing but her clinging to such certainty. It is nirvyāpārasthiti, the condition of absolute inactivity, caused by God-experience. Her words and her actions have been consecrated to God and to no other. That is why, she is like one in sound sleep, when the words of others fail to enter the ears of the sleeper. As her family is noted for its strict adherence to

consecrated service, the gōpikas consider her as an exceptionally wealthy woman, her wealth being Bhagavat kainkaryaniṣṭha, abidance in service to God. This consecration takes two forms: 1. Discharging prescribed duties as acts of God's worship without expecting fruits thereof 2. Renouncing the prescribed duties and rendering services to God in His immediate presence. The first method is Bharata's method and the second, Lakṣmaṇa's. The family to which this gōpika belongs comes under Bharata's category. She comes of a good family and has beauty and wealth. It is noteworthy that women themselves praise her beauty. It is quite common that men are attracted by the beauty of women; and women are attracted by the beauty of men. But it is strange that woman's beauty excites passion among women and a man's beauty among men. Rāmāyaṇa elucidates that Rāma's beauty has captivated the looks and the minds of men. It is said that Draupadi's beauty has provoked passion in women themselves. Likewise, the gōpikas here are charmed by their friend's beauty; and they indulge in a description of it. It follows necessarily that she is of incomparable excellence in beauty (lōkōttara soundarya śālīni). All gōpikas, of course, are dependents on Kṛṣṇa. But the beauty of this particular gōpika, whose experience of Kṛṣṇa is of a very high order, strikes those who have come to wake her up with great wonder. Beauty is confined to the physical body. The gōpikas see her body as they awaken her and feel greatly enraptured. By this, we understand that when we seek the favour of devotees, we should not only appreciate the inner glow of their superb spiritual qualities, but also enjoy the beauty of their external physical forms. We should feel a loving attraction when we look upon the divine features of the preceptors and develop an unbreakable attachment to their possessors. That the gōpikas have developed such love for the sleeping girl proves that the latter has reached perfection in spiritual experience, and that she is able to stir them into a rapture at the mere sight of her divine and auspicious figure.

*Kaṣṭhakaravai kkaṇaṅgaḷ palakaṇandu
 ṣeṇṇārtiṇalaḷiya ccenṇu ṣerucceyyum
 kuṟṟa monṇillāda kōvalardam porṇodiye
 purṟa raval gul punamayile pōdarāy*

*ṣurṣattu ttōḷimārellārum vandu; nin
 muṣṣam pugundu mugilvaṇṇan pērpāḍa
 ṣiṟṟāḍe peṣāḍe ṣelvappenḍaṭṭi, nī
 eṟṟukkuṇṅum poruḷēlōrempāvāy.*

Summary.

“O golden Creeper, that has sprouted in the community of blameless gōpālas, who have high competence in milking herds of cows, (which, though having mothered calves are still young like calves) and who have great strength and valour in facing their enemies and fighting with them! O girl, with hips resembling the hood of a serpent in its hole! O girl with beautiful tresses of hair shining like the peacock in the forest! Come! Your kith and kin and your companions have all arrived. They are assembled in the courtyard of your house. They are glorifying the name of Śrīkṛṣṇa whose body shines with the hue of the dark cloud. How is it that still you remain dull and mute? O wealthy girl! Explain to us the meaning of your sleep.”

Commentary.

1. *Kaṟṟuk kaṟavaḷ kaṇaṅgaḷ palakaṇandu*

“Having milked many herds of cows with young calves.” Though the cows have calves, they are, like calves, quite young. They owe their youth to the touch of Kṛṣṇa and to his flute-song. Only by hearing the music of the flute and by feeling the touch of Kṛṣṇa, have the cows grown lusty and strong; and they are yielding plenty of milk. Kṛṣṇa does not deign to raise his eyes to look on the old cows. All his looks are for the cows that are young and fresh. These cows represent liberated souls, those released from the bondage of samsāra. The liberated souls enjoy eternal youth; they are always twenty-five years of age, because of God’s constant contact and perennial spiritual experience. Those engrossed in God-experience do not age; even the aged people appear fresh and young. In the Rāmāyaṇa, it is stated that Daśaratha felt miserable when sending Rāma into the woods; because separation from him put an end to his happiness. When-

ever he saw Rāma fully dressed and adorned, he was filled with delight; he felt young, rejuvenated and energetic. ("Bhavāmi dr̥ṣṭvā cha punaryuvēva).” There is a particular significance in saying that the liberated persons will ever be twenty-five in age. There are twenty four categories in Prakṛti or Primal Nature. The twentyfifth is the category of self (Jiva). In the liberated person, the real nature of self manifests itself as the body of the Supreme Soul. As the liberated persons know all the twenty-four aspects of Prakṛti and also the nature of self, which is different from it, they will ever remain steady at twenty-five. Sīta tells Anasūya that she was eighteen years of age and her husband Śrī Rāma twenty-five at that time. This might not conform to a reckoning of age from the time of their birth. But there is an inner meaning. Sīta wanted to indicate that Śrī Rāma was God’s incarnation as *perfect* man, who came into the world for the purpose of destroying Rāvaṇa; and so she determined his age as twenty-five to underline that perfection.

There are ‘many such herds’ of cows in Nandavraja. It is impossible to specify the exact number of cows in a herd. It is difficult even to determine the number of the herds. So they say there are ‘many such herds.’ Unable to state the exact number of chariots, elephants and horses in Daśaratha’s army, the Rāmāyaṇa merely says: “Ratha kunjara vājamān”; that Daśaratha has “chariots, elephants and horses.” In the same way, the gōpikas merely say, they have “many herds of cattle.” All these herds are milked by the gōpālas. They do so, not because they want all the milk for their own use; but out of consideration that, if they do not milk them, the cows will suffer from swollen udders. In the same way as Nārāyaṇa ordains and controls all the categories of living creatures, each one of the gōpālas controls and keeps watch over a large number of herds of cows. In the Bhagavadgīta, Lord Kṛṣṇa observes: “Bahūni mē vyatītāni janmāni tava chārjuna: O Arjuna, you and I have had many births.” It is impossible to determine the number of those births; it is equally so with the number of herds of cows: ‘Kaṇgaḷ pala’ “Many herds of cows.” Unable to take count of the good qualities of Śrī Rāmachandra, the people of Ayōdhya tell Daśaratha “Bahavō nr̥pa kalyāṇa guṇāḥ putrasya santitē. Your boy’s good qualities are many.” In this Pāsuram, the gōpikas use the word ‘pala’

which means 'many.' The Sruti says: "Ajāyamāno bahuthā vijāyatē: The Supreme Self who is birthless takes birth in manifold ways." Unable to reckon the modes of the Supreme's manifestation, it uses the word 'Bahu,' 'manifold.' Likewise, as it is impossible to count the number of herds of cows in the community of gōpālās in which Kṛṣṇa has incarnated, they say that 'the herds are many.' If there is a fixed number for the categories of living creatures, if there is a limit to the attributes of God, if there is a count for God's incarnations, if there is a reckoning of the number of births taken by man, then there may be a limit to the extent and the number of herds of cows here also. As there is no limit for any of them, there is none for the cows also.

In the community of gōpālās, each one is capable of milking many herds of cows. Many Vēdic scholars are required to do different duties in a sacrificial rite; but if one scholar accomplishes all the tasks single-handed, his competence deserves utmost praise. Such distinction is common among the members of this community in milking cows. For a Brāhmin, to acquire scholarship in all the branches of Vēdas is a remarkable accomplishment; for a Kṣatriya, to fight single against a host of enemies is a great achievement; for the Supreme Self, to create, all alone, and endow form and name to bodies, suitable for all the individual selves in conformity with their karma, and to command them is a miraculous or mysterious performance, which is beyond the reach of our imagination. Such is the greatness associated with the competence of each gōpa in milking cows, which is their community's occupation. Even those who have strong abiding conviction that God is both the means and the end, carry on the prescribed duties as consecrated services to God. As the gōpālās know Bhagavān and none else, there is no task that they cannot accomplish. So in order to store enough milk and curds and butter for Śrīkṛṣṇa, they go on milking any number of herds of cows.

'Gōpāla' is the 'Āchārya' or teacher, who provides protection to the Vēdas; and imparts to his disciples the knowledge and the code of conduct propounded in them. The cows are the Vēdas. The calves are the Vēdāṅgas, elucidatory appendages to the Vēdas. The cows accompanied by their calves are the Vēdas coupled with the Vēdāṅgas. And these scriptures are endless. The community of the gōpālās is the great band of Āchāryas, who have

deeply studied all the scriptures and drawn out of them the milk of essential teachings for dissemination among their disciples. Today the gōpikas are awakening a girl belonging to this community.

It is not enough to have the conviction that God is both the means and the end and to carry out the duties prescribed by scriptures. It is essential to keep aloof the enemies to the nature of self, to the means adopted, and to the desired end in view, so that there may be no break to spiritual experience. So it is that we are told that these gōpālas are not only competent drawers of milk but also valiant fighters, capable of defeating the enemies. "Drawing the milk from cows" stands for "performance of prescribed duty without desire." Mere skill in drawing milk will not do. There are enemies lying in wait to do harm to the cows; and the gōpālas should have the valour and strength to destroy them. And this prowess they have in an abundant measure.

2. *Ṣeṭṭār tīṭal aḷiyac cenṇu ṣerucceyyum:*

"The community of the gōpālas possesses valour and might to attack the enemies and destroy their strength."

Those who feel jealous of Kṛṣṇa's greatness are the enemies of gōpālas. Those who hate God appear as enemies to those who love Him and have close association with Him. Renouncing Rāvaṇa and leaving Lanka, Vibhīṣaṇa goes to Śrī Rāma and standing in mid-air seeks his refuge. Then Rāma seeks the counsel of his followers on the question of taking him into the fold and giving him protection. Angada observes: "Ṣatrōssakāṣāt samprāptaḥ: As he has come from the enemy, he is suspect." Angada does not specify whose enemy, implying thereby that Rāvaṇa, who is Rāma's enemy and from whose camp Vibhīṣaṇa has come, is his enemy as well. In the same way, all those who are jealous of Kṛṣṇa and who are unable to stand his glorious plenitude are enemies to the gōpālas. Those who hate God are considered as enemies by His devotees. Likewise, those who hate the devotees are deemed by God to be His enemies. Kṛṣṇa considers the Kauravas, who hate the Pāṇḍavas, as his enemies. When Kṛṣṇa goes to Kaurava court to negotiate peace, Duryōdhana, Bhīṣma and Drōṇa, severally get up a feast in his honour. But Śrī Kṛṣṇa does not accept the invitation of any one of them. He goes to

Vidura and partakes of his feast. Duryodhana takes him to task: 'You have rejected me, the great emperor; you have set aside Bhīṣma, the ripe kinsman-sage; you have ignored Drōṇa, the seasoned teacher. How are you justified in accepting feast at Vidura's house? Is not this strange?' Kṛṣṇa coolly replies: "Dwiṣadannam nabhōktayam, dwiṣantam naiva bhōjayēt; One should not eat the food given by the enemy; one should not give food to the enemy." That is why he has rejected their feasts. Lest any doubt should arise as to how Duryōdhana is an enemy, Kṛṣṇa clarifies: "Oh Duryōdhana! You hate the Pāṇḍavas whom I love; the Pāṇḍavas are my vital breath. So you become my enemy." In this way does God consider those who hate His devotees as His enemies. Kamsa is the enemy of gōpālas; because he is jealous of the affluence (aiśvarya) of God and His devotees; because he persecutes all gentle and virtuous people; and because he has been designing to kill Kṛṣṇa himself. He treats all the celestials with contempt. "What can this recluse, Śiva, who smears his body with ashes do? Why should we care for this orthodox Brahma who recites the Vēda by rote like a Brāhmin? Of what worth is this Viṣṇu who lies absent-minded on the serpent-bed? Why fear this Indra who spends all his time in dissipation with the damsels? What can he do?" Thus defying all, Kamsa behaves arrogantly believing that there is none who can resist him. And this Kamsa is the enemy of the gōpālas. The gōpālas take the initiative and strike at Kamsa and reduce his strength before he marches against them.

The ego (Ahaṁkāra) which is born of Nescience (Avidya) and which inflames the mind when it happens to see the plenitude of God and His devotees, is Kamsa. The āchāryas, the valiant warriors who face up and attack the ego and mitigate its strength are the gōpālas. The ego generates enemies of spiritual endeavour; and they are the thoughts that the self is itself the saviour, the doer, the enjoyer and the free agent. The āchāryas alone should eliminate the ego. Before it catches hold of the disciples and makes them its victims, the preceptors chase it to a remote distance. The āchāryas are strong in spirit because of their ripe experience of God's attributes; and so they cast the ego to a distance, so that it might not enter into them. Such are the gōpālas. All this strength they reserve for use against the enemies. To those

who seek their favour, they appear simple and powerless. Lest the sleeping girl, who is born in the gōpa community, should direct on them the valour that should be reserved for enemies, the gōpikas remind her; "You should throw out only your enemies with the show of your strength but not us who seek your favour and who have no other protection. To exhibit your ire to us is not in keeping with the character of your community."

3. *Kuṛṭa monṭillāda*

"You are born in the gōpāla community which has no taint." The gōpālas do not have the blemish of remaining indifferent or inactive when the enemy has advanced to attack. They do not carry the stain of injuring the enemy when he has no weapon in hand to protect himself with. Sīta who has been devoted to Rāma is stolen away by Rāvaṇa; and Śrī Rāma wages a war against him. In the battle that ensues, Rāma fights with Rāvaṇa till the latter is severely mauled and left helpless on the field of battle. Rāvaṇa's chariot is smashed and the weapon in his hand is broken into fragments. Then Rāma shows pity on his opponent and says: "Go. Come tomorrow in a new chariot and equipped with bow and arrows." Such is the generous nature of God; and such, too, is the stainless gallantry of the community of the gōpālas. Again, it is God's nature to ignore the lapses of those who cling to Him, when they are brought to His notice: "If they have committed lapses, let them. They have done well. Lord Kṛṣṇa says: "Apichētsu durācāraḥ bhajatē māmananya bhāḥ sādhuṛēva samantavyaḥ: However wicked a man's conduct may be, if he seeks my favour and adores me, he is good and deserves to be respected." These essential characteristics of God naturally accrue to the gōpālas who are closely associated with Him. Coming from that stock, this girl too must have inherited those qualities:

1. Making a thorough study of the various scriptures in which are propounded the nature, form and attributes and magnificence of God and imparting the knowledge gleaned from them to disciples;
2. Destroying the ego which tends to interfere with the strong conviction and its constant practice in life that God alone is both the means and the end;

3. Not remaining indifferent to those who, having committed lapses at one time, have now repented and become humble supplicants for shelter with none else to look up to for protection.

The community of gōpālas or āchāryas possesses these three virtues; and from this family has sprung the beautiful gōpika of this Pāsuram.

4. *Kōvalardam porḱoḱiyē*

They address her: "O golden creeper of the gōpa community!" By calling her 'a creeper,' they make it clear that she cannot stand without support. By the word 'golden' they indicate that the creeper is bright and strong. As she is entirely dependent on God, she is compared to a creeper. And her awareness of her dependence on Him makes her bright and strong. She is not only dependent on God, but also on saints and devotees of God. The consciousness of such dependence is indicated by the 'creeper' being 'golden.' "Possessing such radiant knowledge, it is not fair that you should leave us out and engross yourself alone with enjoying Kṛṣṇa's union." They crave her to admit them into her company and lead them to Kṛṣṇa.

She has reached the age when she should be united with her husband; and that is why she is compared to a creeper. She has beauty which gives her fitness for union with her husband. She has thus both youth and loveliness. Her youth lies in her being filled with the spirit of entire dependence on Lord Kṛṣṇa; her beauty lies in her strong conviction and abiding practice that Kṛṣṇa is both the end and the means to attain the end.

The gōpikas then describe her loveliness which deludes even women into loving her. It is rare that a woman's beauty rouses the passion of women and that a man's beauty deludes men into love. It is said that Śrī Rāma's resplendent beauty has captivated the looks and the minds of men; and that Draupadi's bewitching beauty has charmed women into falling in love with her. In these cases, we find loveliness at its highest attractiveness and charm.

5. *puṇḍaravālgul punamayilē*

'O girl with hips resembling the serpent in the hole! O girl comparable to the peacock in the woods!'

This description of the girl's hips as resembling a serpent which lies in the hole with its body compressed in coils and the hood covering it, is new. We do not come across such comparison anywhere else. Her hips have the girth and the glow of the hood of a serpent lying coiled in the hole. She is also described as having long luxuriant tresses resembling the bright plumage of a peacock in the woods. The attractiveness of a woman's hips and of the tresses of her hair provokes passion in man, and he yields to it. According to the followers of Śrī Vidyā tradition, the pelvis (*mūlādhāra*) is the base of *Kuṇḍalini* which takes the form of a coiled serpent in repose. The same *kuṇḍalini* power shines in a circular thousand-petalled lotus at the crown of the head. When the *yōgi* by his exercises rouses the *kuṇḍalini* at the base till it reaches the lotus at the crown, he becomes worthy of the love of the Supreme Person. The girl that is awakened here is one of the community that is quite familiar with the secrets of this *Sāṃpradāya* (doctrine).

By mentioning the serpent that is lying coiled in the hole, the *gōpikas* are worshipping the *kuṇḍalini śakti* that remains static at the base. By referring to the tresses of hair as peacock's tail unfolded in splendour, they are thinking of the *kuṇḍalini śakti* roaming about brightly in the crown of the head. The peacock dances on seeing the cloud. In the same way *kuṇḍalini śakti*, on having the vision of the Supreme Person, breaks out into full bloom in the crown of the head. By referring to the peacock as belonging to the woods, the state of loneliness, in which there is no trace of contact with objects of sense, is indicated.

The excellence of her beauty, as a whole, is brought out by comparing the *gōpika* to a 'golden creeper.' The beauty of particular organs of the body is indicated by instituting comparisons to 'the serpent in the hole' and to 'the peacock of the woods.' Devotion is suggested by calling her 'golden creeper' (*Porkoḍi*). The creeper clings to a tree for support; and when the tree cracks and collapses, the creeper also falls with it. Such love that clings

to the support, whatever befalls it, is a sign of rare devotions. The waist is the symbol of renunciation. The gōpālas are distinguished by an abiding sense of duty, by a true knowledge of the self, and by a valiant destruction of the enemies. The golden creeper that has sprouted from their community is devotion (Bhakti). When all objects are merged in the mind in its abiding concentration on a single object, meditation prolongs without break; and the object supporting concentration shines as a vision. This is supra devotion (Para bhakti) and this is reflected in the beauty of the waist. Lustrous tresses of hair are a symbol of infatuation. Even in the state of union, there is a fear that there may be separation again. This is the consequence of infatuation which may be regarded as super-devotion (Parama bhakti). Because this gōpika has devotion, supra-devotion and super-devotion, she has excellent beauty that makes her worthy of being the chosen beloved of the Supreme Person. They tell her: "It is not proper for you to lie still with a light heart, thinking that the Supreme Person will go to you, seeing your bewitching beauty. You have to join us and take us to Him."

6. *pōdarāy*

"Rise and come to us."

"Your beauty is not to be used merely to attract the Supreme to you. Your beauty is to help you in winning Him over and taking us to him. The beauty of your gait should be our sustenance. Therefore walk to us." What lends us support is the beauty of the divinely auspicious figure of the āchārya. The disciple find life in seeing and enjoying that gracious figure. Entering Daṇḍaka forest, Śrī Rāma makes it bright with the radiance of his body. The gōpikas wish that their friend should walk out brightening, in a similar way, the garden comprising the women outside, with the beauty of her peacock-like tresses. With their infatuation for God, great sages infect those who solicit their shelter with dumb-stricken joy. When the gōpikas ask her to walk out of her room and join their company, the girl from within enquires whether all have come.

7. *Ṣuṛattuttōḷimār ellārumvandu*

“All companions having close kinship have come.” All the girls in the village are her relations and her companions. People of the same mind are called ‘companions.’ People who are connected by blood are called ‘relations.’ As all of them are of the same mind that Kṛṣṇa is both the objective to be achieved and the supporting means to it, they become companions. All the kinds of relationship formed on account of blood-connection are held by them with the Supreme only. So they are referred to as ‘companions having close kinship.’

To join God's devotees is in itself a great benefit. There need be no other advantage flowing from it. In as much as all in the village have kinship and friendship with her, they have gathered at her house; moreover, they have none else to attain.

8. *ninmuṛṭṭam pugundu*

“We have entered your courtyard and reached your door.” “By its association with you this courtyard deserves to be reached, even more than the Heavenly Abode. Does not the Lord of all, who owns all, come and stand here?” Līlā Śuka declares in his Kṛṣṇa Karmāmṛta: “Vichinuta bhavanēṣu vallavīnām, Upaniṣadārtha mulūkhale nibaddham.” “The Supreme Phenomenon propounded by the Upaniṣads lies fastened to a grinding-stone in the courtyard of the gōpikas.” Seeing Śrī Rāmachandra on the northern shore of the sea, Vibhīṣaṇa hastens there to show that his objective is only to reach it. “Uttaram tīra māsādyā: Reached the northern shore.” Likewise, the gōpikas reach her courtyard, thinking that to be their intended goal: “ninmuṛṭṭam pugundu: reached your courtyard.” When He reaches your courtyard, He forgets, even though He is the Lord of all, His true form and nature and gets lost in you. This portico effects a change even in the Changeless Supreme. We reach here because we are sure that the place where devotees live is most acceptable to God and gives Him joy. The gōpikas state what they wish to attain at that place.

9. *mugilvaṇṇan pērpāḍa*

“We have come to glorify the name of Kṛṣṇa, whose hue is of the dark cloud.”

The divine and auspicious figure of Lord Kṛṣṇa is charming with its shining hue, that of a dark cloud. Like the cloud, Kṛṣṇa showers favours in a generous way, making no distinction between those who solicit his protection and those who do not, between those who are virtuous and those who are vicious. Seeing the enrapturing beauty of his figure and his magnanimous nature and his gracious considerateness, the mind loses itself in bliss which overflows in the form of words. And those spontaneous words flow into a song. "We glorify the names which reveal the nature, form and attributes of the dark-hued Lord whom you love and admire. This we do, not so much for our delight as for the joy it gives you."

10. *Śiṛṣādē pēṣādē*

"Even though we glorify him, how is it you remain stolid, without a stir or a word?" When God's glory is sung, the divine figure of Kṛṣṇa stirs in memory and thrills the body; or some sweet words take shape out of excessive joy, and linger and vaguely play on the lips of the devotee. The gōpikas say: "Our eyes hunger and our ears thirst to see the actions and to hear the words, emanating from such spiritual experience. Is it fair for you to remain motionless and mute, thus starving our eyes and ears? We eagerly long for the joy of seeing the actions and listening to the words of saints, when they are moved to exhilaration by the fulness of spiritual experience. You are one of them; and yet you deny us the pleasure."

11. *Śelvap peṇḍaṭṭi nī*

"O dear one, possessing immense wealth!" "Your wealth lies in your capacity to enjoy spiritual experiences, piled up in a mass. You have the spirit of surrender, of throwing yourself entirely upon Him as His dependent. Such abilities you possess and they are meant to be used for warmly receiving us and for enabling us to attain spiritual experiences. These talents are not meant to be used for personal enjoyment in isolation. After enjoying spiritual experience in your own light, give us the joy of seeing you in that exalted condition and of hearing your inspiring words. Wealth is not to be used for selfish enjoyment; it is to be given to others to make them happy. Your affluence consists in

your cultivating dependence on God and of winning Him over is put to good use when you induce Him to direct His favours to us; you fail of the purpose when you lose yourself in Him and lie still.

12. *eṟrukkuraṅgum poruḷ ēlōrempāvāy*

“What does your sleep signify?” ‘Sleep’ here means complete immersion in spiritual experience, devoid of consciousness of the happenings without. Such isolated personal sensation is, like *kaivalya*, a state of absolute oneness with self. Oneness with self alone, without connection with God, cannot become full liberation. Similarly, God-experience that is not shared with other devotees is imperfect. The *gōpikas* comment; ‘What you should aspire for is to enjoy spiritual experience in company with other devotees. Instead, how is it you immerse yourself in it in isolation? Have you not heard our cries of agony? Could you, after hearing them, still remain in your blissful state? Don’t you know the sweet deliciousness of that experience? Having known it, how could you refrain from sharing such a sweet with others? How could you feel content and happy with only yourself enjoying it? How are we to understand this lonely condition of yours? If your wish is to please God and cheer Him into a smile by your services arising out of your spiritual experience, you are sure to fail, unless you admit us, His close associates, into your company and impart your joy to us. If you reject our participation, will not your experience smack of selfishness? Should you allow selfishness to vitiate your joy? We should be present to bring you and Him together; when you are together we should be there to serve you both. Even when you suffer separation from Him, we should be there to enliven you by singing about His attributes. When such is the case, why this exhilaration without us? Do join us and let us together enjoy your experience. Awake and come out to join us.”

As in the previous one, so in this Pāsuram also, they awaken an Āḷwār (a saint); this saint is known as “Tirumangai Āḷwār.” Other names by which he is known are ‘Parakāla’ and ‘Kaliyairi.’ He has given to the world six sacred books (*Divyaprabandhas*) which are considered to be the six appendages (*angās*) to Nammāl-

wār's four sacred religious works, which are considered to be the essence of the four Vēdas. Tirumangai Ālwār was born of a mlēccha family. His name was Nīla. Impressed with his strength and valour, the King of Chola gave him some domain and made him his vassal. Nīla wished to marry Kumudavallī, an incarnation of Śrīdēvi. Kumudavallī was found near a tank by a Brāhmin and he was bringing her up. The father agreed to give Kumudavallī to Nīla in marriage. But the girl raised an objection that she would not marry a person that had not undergone the Pancha Samskāras. Then Nīla reverently approached an āchārya, got his limbs marked with the symbols of chakra; and receiving knowledge of the five essentials for spiritual endeavour went back as Parakāla to claim the hand of Kumudavallī. She married him only after he agreed to feast 1008 Śrīvaiṣṇavas every day for a year at a stretch. From that day the entire income on his domain was expended on feasting the Vaiṣṇavite devotees; as a result, he could not pay the tribute due to the Chola King. After several attempts at negotiation to get the tribute paid had failed, the King waged a battle with Parakāla in which he was defeated by the latter. But Parakāla took a pledge to clear the arrears of tribute and began meditation on God. God appeared before him and commanded him to unearth the wealth hidden in Kanchi near the bank of Vēgavati and pay the tribute due. Parakāla did as he was bidden, unearthed the treasure and paid the tribute due. Then he gave up his domain; turned to robbery; and with the money thus acquired entertained the devotees of God. As a robber, he harassed only those who decried the Vēdas and adopted other religions; and with the money taken forcibly from them, he arranged to entertain the devotees of God. He also constructed the outer compound walls (Prākāras) and some assembly-halls (Maṇḍapas) for the Śrī Rangānatha temple in Śrīrangam.

In this Pāsuram is described the milking of herds of cows. The suggestion in it is that all the wealth derived from the earth (which is presented here in the shape of a cow) is used by Parakāla for the service of the devotees. Description is also given of the gōpālas attacking and destroying their enemies. This hints at the way Parakāla stopped people in the woods and robbed them of their belongings. Those who regard the self, which belongs to God, as independent and consider all things, which are His

possessions, as their own, and attempt to enjoy them, are the enemies; they are the Kali-puruṣas. Parakāla, who is also called Kalivairi, has taken away from the followers of Kali their possessions and used them for devotees. This is no robbery. It is only making over to God what is His. The Pāsuram also mentions that the gōpika belongs to the blameless community of gōpālas. Parakāla belongs to the line of succession of honoured traditional āchāryās. The gōpālas are the producers of sacred religious books. Parakāla is the foremost among them. Having an abiding fervour in serving God and His devotees, he is said to have the company of Kainkaryalakṣmi, the wealthy deity of consecrated service. Hence it is that he is addressed as 'Golden creeper.' Thus we may say that Parakāla has been awakened in this Pāsuram.



PĀŚURAM XII

PREFACE.

A lady belonging to a gōpāla family, which is devoted to discharging its prescribed duties, is awakened in the previous Pāśuram. The body of an individual is formed in such a way that it is able to perform works. None can remain without work even for a moment. So to every individual that takes a body, performance of works (Karma) is a natural duty (swadharma). Acquisition of knowledge (Jñāna) is a supreme duty (paradharma). Performance of natural duty (swadharma) eliminates the sins that stand as obstacles to the acquisition of knowledge (Jñāna) and devotion (bhakti). “yajña dāna tapaḥ karma na tyājyaṃ kāryamēva tat; yajñō dānam tapaśchaiva pāvanāni manīṣiṇām: Sacrificial rites, charity, penance and other such works should not be given up. They must be performed. Sacrificial rites, charity and penance cleanse the mind of impurities and help in the acquisition of knowledge and through it devotion.” Renouncing works does not mean giving them up altogether. It means that while performing karma, the feeling that “I am the doer,” and the expectation of reward for the deeds, and attachment to the deeds, should be renounced. Giving up prescribed duties under the delusion that it is renunciation is ‘*tīkṣṇa tyāga*.’ Giving up work for fear that it puts the body to strain is ‘*rūḍha tyāga*.’ The Gīta says that “Sāttvika Karma Sanyāsa,” pure renunciation, consists in doing work as a prescribed duty, without the feeling of being the doer, without attachment, and without expectation of reward. The gōpālas described in the previous Pāśuram belong to this last category.

In this Pāśuram (XII) is described the sister of a gōpāla who has given up doing the prescribed duty. All the gōpālas have the conviction that the Supreme is both the means and the end. So even when they perform works, they do not consider them as means to an end. As they cling to God as the means to their cherished end, they consider that whatever work they do, is done

under the direction of the Supreme and for His own pleasure. So the consequences of their work will not cling to them. Their aim is only to please God. But the gōpāla of today gives up even his prescribed duty; it is not because he is ripe in knowledge. His giving up his duties is on a par with the gōpālas of previous pāṣuram not giving up their duties. This gōpāla is like Lakṣmaṇa. He accompanies Śrī Kṛṣṇa to all places, at all times, and in all states and conditions, and renders service to him. If the prescribed duties come into clash with his service to Kṛṣṇa, he gives them up as he cannot forego Kṛṣṇa's service. Thus, doing duties in the former case is to please Kṛṣṇa; and not doing them in the latter case is also to please Kṛṣṇa. While occupied with service to God, one may not have an opportunity to perform the normal prescribed duties relating to one's varṇa and āśrama; but one incurs no blame by such omission. As such people always abide in God's service, the work that they should otherwise have done is done by three crores of seers (Ṛṣis).

Mat karma kurvatām pumsām karmalōpō bhavē dyadi
Tat karma kurvatē nityam tisraḥ kōṭyō maharṣayaḥ.

Different duties are prescribed to different communities; and in accordance with the stages of life in which they happen to be. Likewise, giving up normal duties is not opposed to but is consistent with the state reached by those who for ever abide in His service.

Giving up works by their *own* choice is not true renunciation. Such a step leads to a disastrous fall. We have seen two types of renunciation. The first is practised by the gōpālas of the previous pāṣuram, performing duty as a consecrated service to God; and the second is witnessed in this Pāṣuram, when preoccupied with service of God, normal duties are given up. Lakṣmaṇa in the Rāmāyaṇa comes under this latter category. He gives up normal duties for the sake of Rāma. In his pre-occupation with services to Rāma, normal duties such as salutations at dawn and dusk and other similar obligatory rites get lapsed. But no blame attaches to him for such omission. Wherever Kṛṣṇa goes, he rests one arm on the shoulder of a dearly-loved close friend of his, and carries the conch in the other. Maybe that friend is Sudāma! Such a companion cannot be away from Kṛṣṇa even for a short

while; so he is unable to attend to his normal routine duty of milking the cows. His sister is being awakened today. Līla Śuka, who is ever immersed in God-consciousness, bids farewell to some of the regular daily obligations.

“Sandhyāvandana! bhadramastu bhavatē
Bhō snana! tubhyam namaḥ:

O ritual of salutation at dawn and dusk! May good attend on thee! O purificatory bath! my obeisance to you!” Devotion to father is as much essential to Lakṣmaṇa as it is to Rāma; still Lakṣmaṇa ignores his father Daśaratha and regards Rāma alone as his father.

Aham tāvan mahārāje pitṛtvam nōpalakṣayē
Bhrātā bhartācha bandhuścha pitācha mama Rāghavaḥ.

“I do not recognise the fatherhood of the great king, Daśaratha. To me Rāma is brother, lord, close relation and father—all rolled in one.” This shows that there is no harm accruing to those who surrender to Him in abiding service, even if they ignore the normal physical duties. Not only that. They enjoy the eternal wealth which takes the same unchanging form of dedicated and unbroken service to Him in everlasting union. Vālmīki thus describes Lakṣmaṇa: “Lakṣmaṇō Lakṣmī sampannaḥ.”

Lakṣmaṇa is enormously rich with the wealth of his infinite love for Śrī Rāma from his very childhood. Worldly riches are short-lived; they flourish today and fade out tomorrow. But the wealth of consecrated service remains unchanged all the time the self exists. It is people who possess such wealth that are truly rich. Caught in the jaws of the crocodile the elephant-king struggles hard to free himself; and after a prolonged but ineffective effort, famishes and is reduced to a skeleton. Not finding succour anywhere, he turns exhausted, as a last resort, to Śrīmannārāyaṇa with the firm conviction that He alone and no other is the Supreme Saviour. Then it is, that he is called “Śrīmān” or “possessor of wealth: “Satu Nāgavara Śrīmān.” Likewise, exiled by his brother and driven to despair, Vibhīṣaṇa leaves behind his wife and children and hastens to the northern shore believing that Śrī Rāma alone is his refuge; he stands before Rāma in mid-air supplicating protection. Then alone is he called “Śrīmān the wealthy one,” :

“antarikṣhagataḥ Śrīmān.” The strong conviction that He alone is the Saviour is what constitutes the affluence of Gajendra and Vibhīṣaṇa. The gōpāla whose sister is to be awakened today is prosperous with the wealth of dedicated service to the Lord. He owns large herds of buffaloes; but he does not milk them, preoccupied as he is with Kṛṣṇa's service. The milk overflows from the cattle making the soil of the sheds miry. It is such gōpāla's sister that is awakened today.

The state which this girl has reached is one of the states of steady wisdom (sthitaprajña) called yatamānāvasta, the state of complete withdrawal of senses from their objects. In the same way as a tortoise withdraws its organs into its shell, the person who reaches this state of God-consciousness withdraws his senses from their objects and directs all his activities to concentrate on God. This state also is a kind of sleep. In the four pāsurams beginning with the ninth, four girls who are in the four phases of the state of steady wisdom are awakened. Bhagavadgīta describes this particular phase in the following verse:—

“Yadā samharatē chāyam kūrmōṅgānīva sarvaśaḥ
Indriyāṇīndriyārdhēbhyaḥ tasya prajāā pratiṣṭhitā

His wisdom will be well-established when, like the tortoise withdrawing its limbs into its shell, he turns away his senses completely from their objects of pleasure.” This girl is the sister of the gōpāla who has absolute control over the activities of the senses and has a strict abidance in rendering consecrated service.

*Kanaittilaṅgatterumai kaṇṟukkiraṅgi
ninaittumulai vaḷiyē ninṟu pāl śōra
nanaittillam ṣeṟakkum narcelvantaṅgāy
panittalaiviḷa ninvāśal kaḍaipatti
ṣinattināl tennilaṅgai kkōmānai cetta
manattukkiniyānai ppāḍavum nīvāy tiṟavāy
inittāneḷundirāy idenna pēruṟakkam
anaittillattāru maṟindelō rempāvāy*

Summary.

“Fondly thinking of their calves and imagining that they have stretched their mouths to their udders, herds of she-buffaloes rain their milk through their teats. There are no milkmen at hand. The whole shed becomes drenched and mity. “O, sister of the wealthy owner of such herds of cattle. We are standing at your door holding the bar of your threshold, while dew is falling on our heads. We are singing the glory of Śrī Rāma, the charmer of hearts, who has killed, in ire, Rāvaṇa, the King of Lanka in the south. Hearing us sing, how is it you do not deign to open your mouth? Won’t you take care of us? Why this deep slumber? The whole village has come to know of your secret. Get up.”

Thus do they awaken the wealthy gōpāla’s sister, who is unable to attend to her normal duties, having been all the time with Kṛṣṇa without a moment’s separation.

Commentary:

1. *Kanaittiṭṭaṅgatterumai Kanṛukkiṇṅi:—*

“The milk-men are away; the she-buffaloes fondly think of their offering and raise a cry for the calves.” It is common knowledge that more than the calves which need milk, the buffaloes which give milk feel concerned about the calves, and clamour for them. The brother of the gōpika to be aroused today owns large herds of buffaloes. But as he is a bosom-friend of Kṛṣṇa, he does not leave him even for a moment. In the same way as Lakṣmaṇa has never separated from Śrī Rāma, this gōpāla has known no separation from Kṛṣṇa from his childhood. All the wealth he needs, lies in rendering service to Kṛṣṇa in all places, at all times, and in all states of life. When an obstacle to Śrī Rāma’s coronation arises, Lakṣmaṇa finds his father responsible for it; and ignoring all filial obligations, he blames Daśaratha and takes him to task rather roughly. He further declares that all that he wishes is that Rāma should become King, and that for himself he needs nothing. He swears that he does not hanker after heaven (swarga) or liberation for himself (mōkṣa). (Nadēvalōkākramaṇam nāma-ratvamaham vṛṇē). He is content with rendering perennial service to Rāma. Those who have strong abidance in the service of God

find no interest in the discharge of their natural and normal duties, nor in the attainment of heaven nor in liberation from the bondage of birth. In their view, perishable things are no wealth. Engrossed in devoted service to Kṛṣṇa, the gōpāla is unmindful of his normal duty; and so the buffaloes are crying for their calves, as their udders are filled with milk to overflowing.

This summoning cry is a characteristic feature of great preceptors. Śrī Kṛṣṇa considers that those who receive anything from him are truly large-hearted people. (Udarāssarva evaitē). A man in distress (ārtī), a seeker of wealth (arthārdhī), an aspirant for knowledge (jijñāsu), and a sage (jñāni)—these four seek his favour to have their wishes fulfilled. All these people are, for certain, large-hearted. If they do not get from him what they want, Śrīkṛṣṇa feels miserable that he has lost his all. Likewise, if some of the wishes of those who cling to him remain unfulfilled, he feels as embarrassed as the one whose debts are mounting up. These she-buffaloes are on a par with the preceptors and the Supreme in this respect. The main characteristic of an āchārya (preceptor) is his gracious considerateness for his disciples, which makes him miserable with concern for them. This loving concern is suggested in the cry of the buffaloes, summoning the calves which are away. The Pāṣuram begins with the word 'crying' 'Kanaittu' so as to emphasise how essential a characteristic this anxious concern for disciples is for an āchārya. Loving concern and considerateness for disciples is important for a preceptor; and entire dependence on the āchārya is important for a disciple. If there is no abiding solicitude for the disciples, the preceptor will have no desire to instruct them. Only when there are calves, do the she-buffaloes feel loving concern for them; and because of it, they fill their teats with milk and cry for the calves. The buffaloes have greater love for their calves than the cows; and so they are prepared to endure any suffering for their sake. The young calves lack the strength to sustain themselves. The individuals who cannot enliven their souls by themselves are like the young calves. The preceptors who are perfect in their knowledge and experience of God's nature, form, attributes and splendour, are like the buffaloes having plenty of milk. The loving concern may be there; but if milk is not there in plenty the teats will not be filled and consequently the buffaloes will have no suffering. Even if there is genuine concern

for the disciples, the preceptors will not feel miserable for them, if they have not attained an abundance of overflowing spiritual experience. Only when the young calves who cannot sustain themselves are there that the buffaloes, which have plenty of milk available, feel the pain in their teats, even because they are unable to feed the calves and empty their udders. The calves do not move towards them. When the disciples who cannot look after themselves are there, the preceptors who have a sumptuous fund of spiritual experience feel distressed that they are unable to impart something of it to them, even because the disciples do not turn to them. Thus, seeing the sufferings of people, the preceptors feel an agony in their minds. On seeing Sita at the foot of the Śimśupa tree, Hanumān feels miserable "Mamāpi vyadhitam manaḥ:" My mind also feels distressed". The distress felt by God for His dependents and the distress felt by preceptors for their disciples are indicated in the suffering of the buffaloes for their calves.

There is a significance in the reference to buffaloes here. Buffalo is called in Sanskrit 'maḥiṣi'. 'Maḥiṣi' also means 'the principal queen.' This 'principal queen' is Lakṣmi herself. Lakṣmi is called "the Divine Queen of the God of gods": Dēvadēva divyamahīṣi. She undertakes mediation in taking the individual selves to the Supreme Self. The preceptors also, like Lakṣmi, undertake this mediation. They help the individual selves, who are immersed in the disturbing occupations of saṃsāra, in reaching out to the Supreme. Occupying the place of such Maḥiṣi (or Lakṣmi) the Āchāryās feel distressed on seeing the ignorant disciples and are eager to instruct them. But as the disciples fail to turn to them, they cry bitterly out of pity for them. Unable to refrain from glorifying God, they describe and elucidate spiritual matters which, like milk, provide nourishment, sustenance and enjoyment. Loving concern for individual selves, perfection in spiritual experience and inability to endure the miserable plight of the disciples, are the essential things. By the word "Kanaithi": "crying," inability to endure the plight of disciples is indicated. By the word 'Iṇāṅgi': 'pitying,' loving concern for the individual selves is suggested. By the expression 'Iṇāṅgatterumai': 'she-buffaloes having calves,' is suggested: (1) possession of milk-like, perfect, spiritual experience; (2) inseparable connection with God;

and (3) close association with disciples who cannot live without the preceptor.

2. *Ninaittu mulai vaḷiyē ninṟupāl śora:—*

“On thinking, milk flows through the teats.”

The buffaloes think of their calves and imagine that they have come to them stretching their mouths to their udders; and so release the milk to flow through their teats without any break. Milk flows on merely thinking of the calves. This, too, is a natural characteristic of preceptors. When they but think of the miseries of their disciples, showers of spiritual experience spontaneously rain from them. When Hanumān sees Sīta in the shade of Śimsūpa tree, he begins to narrate, without any request from her, the story of Rāma so as to give her joy. (‘Rājā Daśarathōnāma rathakunjara vājimān.’) Again, it is not merely thinking about the people who are in the bondage of saṁsāra. It is God, that he remembers with all his mind: ‘manasā chintayat Harim.’ How could God have the mind to remain indifferent when His children are thus emaciated with pain? Are they to pine away grief-ridden? (‘Duṣkaram kurutē Rāmō hīnōya danayā prabhuḥ Dhārayat yātmanō dēham na sōkēnā vasidati’). The Āchārya feels upset when he witnesses the sufferings of the individual souls in bondage to birth. But he never presumes that he will lift them up. He feels but distressed that God has been indifferent to them. With that, God’s grace flows towards them and reaches them through the preceptors who shower it on them. The calf is tied to a post away from the mother. It cannot reach the mother by itself. Unless it is released, it cannot drink the milk from the mother’s udder. The self (jīva) is bound to this post, the body (śarīra), with the rope of Karma or Avidya (previous works or ignorance); unless he is released from it, he cannot reach the Supreme Self. The Āchārya’s heart melts when he thinks of the self in bondage on one side, and the Lord with his boundless mercy on the other. Then the Āchārya, of his own accord and without any solicitation from the disciple, showers spiritual truths. The four teats are the four reasons accounting for the showers of the preceptor’s discourses:

1. Some preceptors believe that God has sent them into the world with the particular mission of bringing about the salvation

preceptors. These preceptors, again, have the distinction of cleansing the hearts of the disciples of 'rājāsic' and 'tāmasic' elements and drenching them spontaneously with their spiritual experience, even because the preceptors are unable to endure the sight of the miserable plight of their disciples under the bondage of birth-and-death. The brother of the girl that is awakened today is one who forgets his normal duties in his preoccupation with devoted service to the Lord. He has the affluence of abiding service to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

4. *Narcelvan taṅgāy*:

"Sister of the owner of great wealth and prosperity."

The experience of such great devotees is capable of bringing about change in any one without any distinction. When such is the case, will not his sister have a similar experience? The gōpikas seem to comment: "In the same way as your brother has ignored the buffaloes, which are under his protection in his preoccupation with the service of Kṛṣṇa, you too, engrossed with your own experience, have been neglecting us who are to be saved by you. This is a quality which has come to you by inheritance." By stating that she is his sister, the implication is, she has this quality in a larger measure. When Vibhīṣaṇa goes to Śrī Rāma to seek succour, he is presented as "Rāvaṇasyānujō bhrātā, a brother born after Rāvaṇa," implying thereby that he is a worse villain than Rāvaṇa. Villainy is patently manifest in the name "Rāvaṇa." In saying that Vibhīṣaṇa is his younger brother, the suggestion is that in villainy he is a match to him. Likewise, in saying that the girl that is awakened is the sister of this gōpāla, the implication is that she possesses the same wealth that her brother has. Vibhīṣaṇa's daughter, Trijaṭa, shows greater zest in serving Sīta than Vibhīṣaṇa in serving Rāma. Likewise, the gōpika has a firmer abidance in service to Kṛṣṇa than her brother. While Vibhīṣaṇa clings to Rāma, his daughter Trijaṭa attaches herself to Sīta, whose devotion to Rāma is immense. The gōpikas urge their friend: "Your brother serves Kṛṣṇa; it is just that you should therefore come to help us who cling to the same Kṛṣṇa. Serving God includes, without specific mention, serving God's devotees. We have lost ourselves to Kṛṣṇa. To protect us is your obvious duty. There is no contradiction in this to your devotion to God. Get up and come to us."

5. *Panittalai viḷa ninvāḍal kaḍaipatti*

“While dew is falling on our heads, we stand here holding the bar of your threshold.”

The gōpikas say:

“As the milk of the buffaloes flows incessantly, the floor of the house has become slushy. The foot slips and we are unable to stand steadily there. Above us drips the dew; and we cannot remain exposed to it. With hope urging us we have come close to your threshold; to prevent a fall from the slipping foot, we have caught hold of the upper rafter of your threshold and steadied ourselves.”

There is moisture below and there is moisture above. The moisture below is caused by the flow of buffaloes' milk. Feeling miserable with the plight of disciples and without any request from them, the Āchāryas, like the buffaloes, stream forth their instructions based on their experiences of God. This stream is signified by “the moisture below.” This is visible to us and we are directly experiencing it.

Besides this, there is dew falling from above. This ‘dew’ represents the experience of God's attributes, which the Divya Sūktas, divine utterances of Āḷwārs and previous preceptors (Pūrvāchāryas) inspire in us. The water becomes hot and then turns into vapour by the impact of sun's rays during daytime; the vapour cools at night when the moon's rays fall on it and descends as drops of dew. Abiding knowledge in spiritual experience is like the heat of the sun during daytime; this experience cannot be apprehended by all. Those who abide in devotion cool that very experience and reveal it through their words. Then it becomes, like dew, pleasant and enjoyable. This dew is also refreshingly cool; and this is the form taken by the spiritual experience caused by the precious utterances of the ancient āchāryas about God's attributes. The gōpikas standing at the threshold are enjoying the combined experience—that caused by the spiritual instructions of the preceptors and that derived from the divine utterances of the ancients. As all the gōpikas stand close to one another, there flows amidst them a stream of shared spiritual experiences of the assembled devotees. Thus there is moisture

of milk below, the moisture of dew above, and in between the moisture of the hearts melting in bliss in the community of devotees. With that they seem to have been swept away in another sea. The sea has another name, "munniṟu": Triple-stream. In it three kinds of water mingle: water that seeps from below, water from rain which falls from above and water from rivers which flow into it. Likewise here, there is spiritual instruction from the preceptors from below; there are the divyasūktās, divine utterances of the ancients from above; and in between there is the shared experience of fellowship of the community of devotees. Lest they should be swept away by the swift current of the combined spiritual experience, the gōpikas have caught hold of the upper horizontal bar of the threshold. That is to say, that while engrossed in this experience, no thought that "I am enjoying it" or "this is to be enjoyed by me" should cross the mind. This experience is intended only to develop love of God and love of God's devotees and not to promote any personal interest. The tendency to enjoy this as a personal experience (bhōktṛtva buddhi) is what is indicated by the slipping of the foot in the stream. When this happens, when the foot slips, one has to catch hold of the upper horizontal bar of the threshold. The threshold is the Tirumantra, the auspicious incantation, which opens into spiritual experience. This incantation consists of eight letters (aṣṭākṣari). There are three words in it. The first word 'ōm' and the third word "Nārāyaṇāya" are the vertical rafters on either side of the threshold. The middle word "namaḥ" connects these vertical rafters; at the bottom is the horizontal bar "maḥ" and at the top is the other horizontal bar "na." "Namaḥ" means "not mine." This word "namaḥ" rouses the thought of "not mine." This word "namaḥ" is to be held tightly for support so that the intellect might not slip into personal enjoyment of God-experience. There should be this firm conviction that 'this experience is not for me' but for Him only. This is what is implied in catching hold of the upper horizontal bar of the threshold. The gōpikas without are engrossed in the experience of God's attributes without any thought that they are enjoying it. They pass through that experience, so that they may see the bright bloom on the face of the girl within. To make her understand their position, they say: "Dear one! We stand here, clasping the upper horizontal bar of your threshold."

6. *Sinattināl tenni laṅgaikkōmānai ccēṭṭa manattukki niyānai-ppāḍavum nīvāy tīravāy*

“Hearing us sing the glories of the charmer of hearts, Śrīrāma who has killed in ire Rāvaṇa, the king of Lanka in the south, how is it that you do not deign to open your mouth in reply?”

The gōpikas stop glorifying Kṛṣṇa and begin to sing the praises of Rāmachandra. Kṛṣṇa does not know how women suffer the pangs of separation. In fact, making them suffer like that is a sport with him. He does not grieve for those whom he loves when they are away from him. What is the use of glorifying such a person? But Śrī Rāma, unable to endure separation from the woman who has loved him, suffers for her and gives up food and sleep. The gōpika within, having established close contact with Kṛṣṇa has, like him, become unmindful of the sufferings of those who seek her favour; and that is why she sleeps so soundly. If she but hears of Śrī Rāma's story she is sure to open her mouth and speak. So they begin singing Śrī Rāma's praises. At the outset, they refer to Śrī Rāma's anger. Śrī Rāma, urged by anger has killed Rāvaṇa. But Śrī Rāma has conquered anger. How can he become angry? “Ātmavān kō jitakrōdhaḥ.” Thus has Vālmīki raised the question ‘who is the conqueror of anger?’ and received the answer that ‘Śrī Rāma is.’ Besides, in the places where Rāma is described in the Rāmāyaṇa as angry, Vālmīki says, “krōdha māhārayat” Rāma purposely assumes anger. He does not become angry. He purposely assumes it when necessary. Anger is under his control; he never yields to it. Is there no anger in him? There is, but it is always under his control. When he assumes anger, even those supplicants who cling to him close, feel frightened that he is really angry. Vālmīki questions Nārada about this particular matter: “who is he of whom even the immortals fear when he gets angry in battle?” (“Kasyabibhyati dēvascha jāta rōṣasya samyugē.”) From this it is clear that Śrī Rāma; assumes anger and is not by nature angry. But in this Pāsuram the gopikas believe that Śrī Rāma has become naturally angry. Could he, who is like cool water that has never known warmth, have anger at all? This doubt usually arises. But we see in the Rāmāyaṇa that Śrī Rāma becomes very angry on one occasion that he yields to anger. Both Lord Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Rāma kill the enemies of their supplicants for refuge, when the latter are

threatened with danger. But Śrī Kṛṣṇa thinks that by eliminating the enemies of his supplicants for protection, he has done them a favour. Śrī Rāma, on the other hand, thinks that destroying enemies is to allay his anger and not to help his supplicants. Here is an illustration to prove the above statement. Śrī Rāma is seated on Hanumān while doing battle with Rāvaṇa. So long as Rāvaṇa aims his arrows at him and strikes him, Rāma endures them all without any sign of anger. Then Rāvaṇa strikes Hanumān, who is bearing Rāma, with his sharp shafts and wounds him severely. Then Rāma's anger becomes uncontrollable ("Tatō Rāmō mahā tējāḥ Rāvaṇena kṛta vranam Dṛṣṭvā plavagaśārdūlam kōpasya vaśa mēyivān"). Thereafter, Rāma becomes effulgent, and seeing Hanumān wounded yields to rage. Thereafter, that is when Rāvaṇa's arrows strike Hanumān, Rāma who has till then been cool and collected and radiating joy all around, becomes forbiddingly effulgent, like fire rising out of the waters (so that others are unable to stand before him and look on him). Hanumān knows of no wound from his childhood, except the one that he has brought upon himself as he falls during his flight to catch the sun. He has received no blow from others. Such a warrior is now wounded by Rāvaṇa. In speech Hanumān is unexcelled by others, while Rāvaṇa is mean in speech. Rāvaṇa utters lies and vain boasts. That is why he is called Rāvaṇa. Rāma's mind is hurt on seeing Hanumān wounded by the despicable Rāvaṇa. But Hanumān goes on expanding his body as each arrow strikes him. Like the tree flourishing with new buds with repeated showers of rain, the body of Hanumān grows to a higher and higher stature, with showers of arrows repeatedly striking him. To indicate this, Valmiki uses the words "plavaga Śārdūlam,": The little monkey has become a big tiger. Rāma who has purposely to work himself into anger all along, now sees Hanumān's wounds and becomes a victim of rage. This shows that when his dependants are *threatened* with danger, he works himself into anger. When they are *hurt* and distressed, anger takes possession of him. That is all. He has no anger of his own. His anger is reserved for the cause of his dependants. When Sugrīva is angry with Vāli and desires Rāma to kill Vāli, Rāma becomes angry with Vāli and kills him. After Vāli's death, Sugrīva, moved by fraternal feeling, bitterly weeps for him. And Rāma also sheds tears for the dead Vāli. Such is the nature of identification of Śrī Rāma with those

who cling to him as supplicants. Rāma is angry with Rāvaṇa because he has stolen away Sita who has given herself to him. In the cause of his supplicants and for giving them protection, he regards their enemies as his own; and though himself devoid of anger, assumes anger for their sake. In order to emphasise this idea, the gōpikas begin their glorification of Rāma with the word "Sinattinal: with anger." Whom Śrī Rāma kills in anger is Rāvaṇa; but instead of putting it that way, they add, "who happens to be the King of Lanka in the South." There is an implied secret in this addition. The South is the direction in which the burial-ground is located. Hence it is not worthy of praise. Lanka is situated in that direction, and Rāvaṇa is its lord (adhipati). From this, we find the suggestion of both despicability and greatness. To be in the south is 'mean'; but to be the King is 'great.' This double aspect is revealed in the words of Hanumān when he first sets his eyes on Rāvaṇa: "Ahō vīryamahō dhairyam: how great in valour, and in courage!" In these words he thinks of the greatness of Rāvaṇa as King. "Yadyadharmō na balavān: "How great he will have been, if unrighteousness has not flourished." Thus we find in Rāvaṇa meanness on one side and greatness on the other. Such is the Rāvaṇa that Śrī Rāma has killed. The gōpikas sing that Rāma is manōbhirāma, the enrapturer of hearts. Let us pause for a while to understand the inner meaning of these observations of the gōpikas.

Lanka that is ruled by Rāvaṇa represents this body of man. This is the place of Death. Hence it is that Lanka is located in the south. The lord of this body is the Mind, as Rāvaṇa is of Lanka. Rāvaṇa has ten faces; the mind too has ten faces, the ten sense-organs. The Ego, the feeling of 'I' and 'mine,' which is the sprout of rajōguṇa, is what makes for unrighteousness of the mind. Rāvaṇa's adharma lies in his excessive egoism. If only he were free from this strong ego, Rāvaṇa could have made a competent ruler over the three worlds. The mind has both capacities; it has the ego which makes for unrighteousness and the purity which enables it to vision God. "Viśuddha manasā grāhyaḥ: He is knowable by the mind which is free from rajas, passion, and is filled with sattva, purity." The mind has thus the power to gain hold on the Supreme. But the ego dies hard. Before it can be destroyed, all things that are covered by the feeling of

'mine' should be done away with. That is the reason why the armies and the attendants, the sons and the grandsons, of Rāvaṇa are eliminated, before Rāvaṇa is killed. On one occasion, Rāma deprives Rāvaṇa of his chariot and bow and arrows and gives him leave to go to the city and come back refreshed and properly equipped. Even after this humiliation, Rāvaṇa's egoism continues unabated and at last Rāma has to kill him. Because of generous acts of gallantry, Rāma has become the enrapturer of hearts. These actions show what gracious consideration he has even for his enemies. He does not start with the intention of killing his enemies. He waits till the last with hope that a change may come over them, so that the painful necessity of killing them may be obviated.

Kṛṣṇa does not show such consideration to his enemies. He kills them outright. It is not his nature to show them consideration and to allow them opportunities for rectification or reform. The gōpikas think that no good ensues by glorifying Kṛṣṇa, who persecutes even suppliants who seek his refuge. So they begin glorifying Rāma who pities and extends consideration even to his enemies. Śrī Rāma's story has the power to moisten and soften the minds that have become dried and have developed cracks on account of separation from Kṛṣṇa. The story of Rāma enlivens and rejuvenates. Sita who is about to die while in captivity in Lanka hears the story of Rāma from Ānjanēya and revives. Rāma's story is also the refuge for the gōpikas.

Kṛṣṇa's conduct has caused distress to those who deeply love him. It has brought disgrace to the mother who has nursed and brought him up. The world blames the mother that she has given birth to a highly mischievous and naughty son. On the other hand, Śrī Rāma's conduct has brought praise from the world to his mother. "Kausalyā lōka bhartāram suṣuvēyam manasvinī: The high-souled Kausalya brought forth Rāmachandra, the Lord of the World." The idea underlying their glorification of Śrī Rāma is that he will destroy their egoistic tendencies of 'I' and 'mine,' and vouchsafe them pure mind which makes them fit to approach and serve the preceptors and the devotees of God. Though the gōpikas are free from egoism, they are painfully surprised that their friend within does not respond to their call. They ask her: "You may not care to respond to us. But won't you

“speak out at least out of the uncontainable fulness of bliss which hearing Rāma's story raises in you?”

inittān eḷundirāy

‘Won't you get up yet? Rise and come to join us.’

“Well, you may not get up for our sake. But won't you wake up for your own good? Do you find pleasure in our suffering? Will not sympathy with our suffering and comforting us in our miserable plight contribute to your perfection? If not for our benefit, for your own perfection, should you not help us?”

Although the preceptors are aware of the suffering of their disciples in their separation from God, they remain indifferent for a time. To feel the pangs of such separation is a stage in the pursuit of the highest end desired. When their disciples reach that state and continue to suffer that agony, they cannot remain indifferent for long. They intercede, comfort their disciples, and bring about their union with God. The gōpikas ask their companion: “Should you not discharge this obligation of an Āchārya? Pray, get up.”

8. *idenna pēruṭakkam*

“What could be this deep and great sleep?”

“Your sleep is not the sleep of the worldly. Nor is it the sleep of the Yōgis. The worldlings, full of the tendency of inertia, feel tired with work and go to sleep, to give rest to their strained senses. Your sleep is not that. The sleep of the Lord-of-All, who rests on the ocean of milk with concern to protect and do good to the whole universe, is Yōgic sleep—Vēdic sleep, which is in tune with the Vēdas. Your sleep is not this, either. Yours is a great peculiar sleep, different from either of the two kinds mentioned above. Living in this world but unaffected by inertia, you have reached a state when you lose yourself in God-consciousness, with all the activities of senses consecrated to it. When you see those, who strictly abide in their preceptors, suffering misery from separation from them (āchāryas), should you not wake up from your sleep? When devotees raise a cry of despair and crave for protection, the Supreme Self lying on the ocean

of milk wakes up from sleep on hearing it. Should you not, likewise, hearing our cries of agony and craving for an āchārya who can bring about our union with God, bestir yourself from sleep?"

9. *Anaittillattārum aṇḍ ēlōremṇāy*

"The whole village knows your secret. Get up."

"You may possibly be thinking that the subject of God is to be kept a secret. In our village, the people know no other than Kṛṣṇa, and consequently they all know the secret of your experience. Come out and share your happiness with us and help us to have union with Kṛṣṇa."

As in the previous Pāsurams, so in this also, there is an invocation to an Āḷwār (a saint). He is Kulaśēkhara Āḷwār. He is the Lord of Kēraḷa and an Emperor. He is 'nal selvan,' owner of great wealth. Like Lakṣmaṇa he has an abiding zest in the service of the Lord. Again, like Śatrughna, he has an inherent fervour for the service of God's devotees. He shows an accomplished adroitness in his devotion to Śrī Rāma. He excels in glorifying Kṛṣṇa in devotional songs. He has felt a concern not only for his subjects but for all mankind. This concern is similar to "the crying of the buffaloes." He has wept for those who are denied spiritual experience; he feels concerned for all those who struggle and suffer on account of the bonds of birth-and-death. "Hē lōkāḥ sruṇṭa: Listen, O men of the world," "Hē martyāḥ paramam hitam sruṇṭa: All humans! Listen. What I say is for the greatest good of all!" "Ahōjanānām vyasanābhimukhyam: Alas! How zealous people are for the trifles of life!" Thus has he expressed his grief at several places in his Mukunda-māla. The buffaloes merely think of their calves and release milk at once. Thinking of his subjects, he has released the stream of the glory of God's attributes to flow in his songs. Such is his great generosity. While listening to the recital of Rāmāyaṇa, he hears that Rāvaṇa has carried off Sita. This outrage upsets him. Equipping himself with bow and arrows, he marches with his armies in the direction of Lanka. His ministers devise a plan and present Śrī Rāma as returning with Sita after defeating Rāvaṇa; and thus persuade him to desist from his enterprise. With such

zest and self-forgetting devotion has Kulaśekhara committed himself to God's service. His services to God's devotees are marked by a greater fervour. Every day he proposes to go to Śrīrangam; but every day he has to postpone his pilgrimage. Because every day he finds some devotees coming to the city. He considers that serving God's devotees is more important than serving God Himself. All that he aspires for is that he should become the step of the threshold directly in front of the divine and auspicious image of Śrī Ranganātha in his temple at Śrīrangam, so that he may constantly come into touch with the feet of the devotees going there. He is called 'Perumāḷ' in Tamil. His abiding faith in God and His devotees and his dedication to their service have a peculiar flavour of their own. In order to rouse such a great saint, the gōpikas here glorify the attributes of Śrī Rāma who is his favourite deity. "Won't you open your mouth and speak even after our singing the glory of Śrī Rāma?" From these words it is clear that the saint awakened here is, for certain, Kulaśekhara Āḷwār. In "Kulaśekhara," "Kula" is the clan of humble supplicants for grace and "Śekhara" is the crown-gem among them. This Kulaśekhara has believed that service of God and godly men alone is real wealth, and ignored as transitory the possessions of this world.



PĀŚURAM XIII

PREFACE.

In waking up the girl in the previous Pāsuram, the gōpikas give up the glorification of Kṛṣṇa and begin singing about Śrī Rāma whom they regard as the enrapturer of hearts. This preference for Rāma brings about a commotion in the village. People argue that it is unfair to switch over to Rāma giving up Kṛṣṇa. Born in Mathura and brought up in Nandavraja among the gōpālas, Kṛṣṇa has identified himself with them and has been giving them all protection. When Rāma was in Ayōdhya, the people used to think and talk of him only and of no other; "Rāmō Rāmō Rāma iti prajānā mabhavan Kathāḥ" The question arises for what particular reason should any one else than Kṛṣṇa be glorified in Nandavraja? Is Śrī Rāma, really, the enrapturer of hearts? In beauty and in qualities, is not Kṛṣṇa superior to Rāma? Of all qualities, the most praiseworthy is easy accessibility. This quality is more pronounced in Kṛṣṇa than in Rāma. Kṛṣṇa accepts the lowliest undertakings of a messenger and a charioteer of the Pāṇḍavas; and these he does as though it is a high privilege conferred on him. To be called Pāṇḍavas' messenger and Pārtha's charioteer is taken by him as a great honour. He is the very embodiment of gracious generosity in that, when Arjuna falls into dejection on the field of battle, he teaches him the secrets of the science of the Absolute. Are these qualities manifested in Śrī Rāma with such brightness? Why then this preference? Even in beauty Śrī Kṛṣṇa excels Śrī Rāma: "Maṇi vitambini tasya manōharē vapuṣi magnamanā muni mandalī vratamamunchata, hōmamamunchata, japamamunchata, Vēdamamunchata-Even the (munis), silent meditators, who have overcome their senses, are enamoured of Kṛṣṇa on seeing his sapphire-bright body; and they give up their meditations, fires, rituals and even regular recitation of Vēdas." Is it proper to say that Śrī Rāma is more charming than Śrī Kṛṣṇa? Again, they say that those who think that Śrī Rāma is more considerate to women are not justified in thinking so. When a woman, who has fallen in love with him, approaches

him, he makes merry at her expense and finally disfigures her. Such is his chivalry! They conclude that it is therefore improper to sing his praises, leaving out Śrī Kṛṣṇa. There is something more which they advance to justify their contention. Granting that Rāma is handsome and virtuous, they plead that to glorify him leaving out Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is the adorable God for them, leads them to a fall. The Śruti says that he who abandons his own deity and worships another deity, not only becomes distant from his own deity but also fails to attain the other deity; and thus suffers utter degradation. They decide that they should therefore sing the glories of Kṛṣṇa alone in this Nandavraja and earn salvation; and that it is wrong to sing the praises of Rāma. These disputes cause commotion in the village.

Then some gōpikas who have had long spiritual experience intercede. They say that this dispute is ridiculous. The Supreme Lord who keeps lying on the ocean of milk has Himself assumed different forms for the protection of the good and the virtuous. So there is no difference in essence. Śrī Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa differ only in name and form, but they are the same Supreme. They point out that each devotee has a particular image of the Lord of which he is fascinated and to which he loses his heart, according to the state of his mind. One devotee has declined to worship Śrī Rāma whom people glorify as one who enamours all. He seems to have said: "O Rāma, set aside your bow and arrows for a moment. Put on the peacock crest and hold the flute in your hand. Then I shall make my obeisance to you." In taking such a posture the devotee fails to recognise that that day's Kṛṣṇa is the Śrī Rāma of the past age. In proof of this, a gōpika relates an incident during Kṛṣṇa's childhood. "Yasōda places Kṛṣṇa in the cradle and, while swinging it, begins singing the story of Śrī Rāma. "Rāmō nāma babbhūva:" Once upon a time there lived a man called Rāma"; Kṛṣṇa said "Hum." Tada-balā Stīti-Sita was his wife." Kṛṣṇa said 'Ha.' "Tau piturvāchā panchavaṭi vanē viharataḥ: Obeying their father's command they went into the woods and were wandering in Panchavaṭi." "Tāmā harad Rāvaṇaḥ: Sita was stolen away by Rāvaṇa." When the story comes to this point, Kṛṣṇa, who is getting drowsy as a preparation for sleep, suddenly springs up crying, "Soumitrō kva dhanurdhanurdhanuriti: Lakṣmaṇa! the bow, the bow, the bow".

From this, it is clear that this Kṛṣṇa is the Rāma of yore. Yasōda, too, calls Kṛṣṇa, now and then by the name of Rāma; she sees no difference between the two." These observations of the gōpika effect a compromise between the disputants; and as both Rāma and Kṛṣṇa are the same to them, they decide to sing the praises of both. As they are then in Nandavraja during the time of Kṛṣṇāvatāra, they will sing his glories first and later those of Rāma. So while awakening the girl that day, they refer to both these stories, of Rāma and of Kṛṣṇa.

Today's gōpika holds a pre-eminent place among her friends for the beauty of her eyes. If only a woman has beautiful eyes, how can Kṛṣṇa refrain from going in search of her and fail to find her? With such assurance does the gōpika remain at home lying on her bed. 'Eye' signifies 'Knowledge.' The beauty of Knowledge consists in a clear understanding of the nature of the individual self and the nature of the Supreme Self. To know that the self belongs to the Supreme and is dependent on Him and that it is to be protected and saved by Him, is to have the correct understanding of self. To know that the Supreme is the Possessor, the Saviour and the Ordainer is to have a correct understanding of the Supreme. Those whose knowledge of both is perfect, make no effort of their own to attain the Supreme. They will disburden their minds and give up all activities, in the conviction that, as they are His possessions, He will take them Himself. The gōpika to be roused today has the desire to attain Kṛṣṇa, but she makes no effort towards that end. She goes to a couch, once used by Kṛṣṇa and later forsaken, and feeling enamoured of it lies on it, smelling its fragrance and enjoying its touch.

*Puḷḷinvāy kiṇḍānai ppollāvarakkanai
 kkiḷḷikkalaṇḍānai kkīrtimai pādippōy
 ppiḷḷaigaḷellārum pāvaikkaḷampukkār
 veḷḷiyeḷundu viyāḷamuṇḍittu
 puḷḷum Ṣilumpinagāṇ pōdarikkaṇṇināy
 kuḷḷakkulirakkuḍaindu nīrāḍāde
 paḷḷikkidattiyō pāvāy ninannāḷāl
 kaḷḷan daviṇḍu kalandelō rempāvāy*

Summary.

All our companions have reached the place of ritual, singing, all the way, the glories of Kṛṣṇa (who has saved himself and us by splitting, in twain, the mouth of Bakāsura who has taken the form of a crane); and the glories of Rāma (who has in sport pinched, as one nips the tender buds, the ten heads of Rāvaṇa and thrown them down into dust). O girl, with eyes resembling lotus-flowers enfolding bees within, and with looks resembling the deer's! Look! Venus is rising; Jupiter is setting; and the birds are twittering. Why do you continue to lie in bed, instead of having a cool refreshing bath which stills the torment of separation from Kṛṣṇa? O girl of tender susceptibility! On this auspicious day, give up your shyness, join us and share your bliss with us.

Commentary.

1. *Puḷḷinvāy kinḍānai*

At the outset, the gōpikas praise Kṛṣṇa who has split, into two, the mouth of the demon-possessed crane. In this, they refer to the story of Bakāsura. A crane settles down stolidly on the water-margin and is waiting for a chance to snatch food. A demon finds Kṛṣṇa there and wants to put an end to him by swallowing him. So he enters the crane and the latter becomes 'possessed.' Kṛṣṇa scents this and deliberately puts himself within the reach of the crane; and when it opens its mouth to swallow him, he splits its mouth into two and kills it. Of the several miracles performed by Kṛṣṇa, this one is the most trivial. But the gōpikas choose to mention this insignificant incident, and not such feats as the pounding of Kālīya or the lifting of the mountain Gōvardhana. As a matter of fact, there is no difference of 'big' and 'small,' 'great' or 'low' in the sports of Kṛṣṇa; to him who is All-powerful, all exploits are equally small; and to us, all are equally miraculous. Killing Rāvaṇa during the incarnation of Rāma stands on a par with splitting Bakāsura in twain during the incarnation of Kṛṣṇa. These demons are our enemies who come to keep God away from us. Their attempts at putting an end to God signify their efforts at making Him invisible to us. We cannot eliminate such enemies; God alone must put an end to them. All that we can do is to let Him exterminate them. Those, who believe that the Lord is

the only means to attain Him and so surrender to Him, do not think that their devotion will be an instrument or agency to take them to Him. But those who adore God, with the aid of their works and the knowledge they have acquired, develop devotion; and they endeavour to reach Him with devotion as their means. Those who cling to *Him as means*, with their incompetence and ignorance co-operating with them, accept for support His power and His knowledge, and remain steady in that conviction. Pretentiousness is the principal enemy to that conviction. To appear to be different from what we really are is what is called pretentiousness (Dumbha). He whose very life consists in doing evil to others tries to present himself as a man of gentleness and purity. The crane lives on fish and lies in wait at the water-margin, only to catch and swallow fish. But the purity of its form, its steadfastness, and its half-closed eyes in meditation, make it look like a yogi who has given up all worldly affairs. There are some who inwardly feel that they have the competence to protect themselves, but appear and behave outwardly that God alone is their means and refuge. Such false supplicants are the cranes. God destroys this enemy of pretentiousness and gives Himself to us. Pretentiousness and ego are the principal enemies that oppose our reaching the conviction that He alone is the means to attain Him. He eliminates those two enemies and creates in us the faith that He is the means. This is the significance of the episode of Bakāsura. Thereafter, the gōpikas talk about the story of Rāvaṇa's death. Now that they have sung the glory of Kṛṣṇa who is close and familiar to them, they turn to glorifying Rāma of an earlier age.

2. *Pollāvarakkanai kiḷḷikkaḷaindānai:*

They glorify Rāma as the one "who has pinched and cast away the wicked demon."

Now they turn to the very embodiment of goodness, Śrī Rāma, who has suffered immeasurable distress because of separation from one of their sex, Sita. Rāvaṇa is of a despicable character in that he has not allowed mother and father to remain together, but separated them from each other. It is like separating the body from the self. Thinking of that wickedness, they mention it first, "Pollā: wicked." "Words fail to describe the enormity of that wickedness—the wickedness of taking the mother captive,

Unable to find words to describe Rāvaṇa's wickedness, Vibhīṣaṇa merely says about his brother that he is "a bad character: Durvṛttaḥ." Finding no limits to Rāvaṇa's meanness, Sīta addresses Rāvaṇa as "Nīcha", a despicable fellow. "Among the demons, there is one who has become a false deer; there is another who has shown a false head; but there is none who has this audacious wickedness of carrying off Śrī Mahālakṣmi from the Lord-of-all. Hence they say "the wicked demon," without mentioning his name. There is no need to mention the name; the words "wicked demon" spontaneously suggest "Rāvaṇa." "I shall roll the whole world, including its mountains, upside down—Jagatsaṣailam parivartayāmyaham"—Such is Rāvaṇa's boast. The same Rāvaṇa has put on disguise and carried off Sīta in a clandestine manner; and in this is his wickedness manifest. A doubt may arise as to whether there is any distinction among demons as 'virtuous' and 'wicked,' since all of them are 'wicked.' But consider what Sūrpaṇakha has said: "Vibhīṣaṇastu dharma-mātma"—"But Vibhīṣaṇa is full of virtue." That shows that among demons, too, some are virtuous. But Rāvaṇa is the most wicked among them. It is such a demon that is pinched and cast away.

If in a garden some pest attacks the tender budding leaves of a tree, the affected leaves are nipped with finger-nails and thrown away. With such ease and in facile sport, Rāma pinches the heads of Rāvaṇa and casts them away in disgust. The whole world is God's garden. The vicious are like the pest-infected buds. To the Lord who by His mere volition creates, sustains and destroys all the worlds, chopping off the heads of Rāvaṇa is the work of a trice. To indicate that this is the least little work for an Almighty One, the words "pinched and cast away" are used in this context. The wife of a hero generally adopts this method in relating the valiant deeds of her husband. She presents the lifting up of the Govardhana mountain as a facile act of picking up a small stone; and the striking off of Rāvaṇa's heads as a small part of easy sport, nipping off sick buds.

Śrī Rāma has had to face many ordeals, according to the Rāmāyaṇa, in bringing about Rāvaṇa's death. He makes an enormous effort to kill him. It is a prolonged process: making friendship with Sugrīva, sending Hanumān on an expedition in

search of Sita, bridging up of the sea, finally receiving spiritual instruction in Āditya Hṛdaya from Agastya etc. How then can it be said that Rāma has killed him with great ease? This is a legitimate doubt. But let us recall to mind the situation presented in the epic at the time when Vibhiṣaṇa seeks succour from Śrī Rāma. Sugrīva opposes the idea of giving protection to Vibhiṣaṇa, because he apprehends trouble from him, as he has come from the enemy-camp. Śrī Rāma is determined to give him refuge whatever might happen. To remove Sugrīva's doubt and allay his fear, Rāma declares ;

"Piśāchān dānavān yakṣān pṛthivyām chaiva

Rākṣasān anguḷyagrēṇa tān hanyām icchan Hariganēśwara".

Sugrīva! I can, if I so choose, kill with my finger's tip all the ghouls, devils, demons, and elves." Sugrīva looks in such a way as to suggest that "if that is so, why all this bother? Why not kill Rāvaṇa at once?" To this Rāma says "icchan—I can kill *if* I will it so. But I do not propose to do it." From this, it is clear that although he is Almighty, he has not intended then to kill Rāvaṇa; and so he has spared him. That Rāma possesses the power to destroy any *at will* is evidenced in the incident described below. Śrī Rāma seeks a favour from the lord of the ocean and prays to him to give passage to Lanka. When he does not respond, Rāma flies into rage and fixes an arrow to his bow to punish him. The lord of the ocean explains his difficulty and seeks forgiveness of Rāma for his natural incompetence to dry up and suggests the alternative course of building a causeway. He requests him to aim his arrow at his enemies in the northern portion of the ocean when Rāma declares that his arrow cannot remain ineffective. Rāma does accordingly and destroys them.

Śrī Rāma commands Sugrīva to fetch the person that has come to seek his protection adding that even if he be Rāvaṇa and not Vibhiṣaṇa, he is prepared to grant him refuge. He will not have the courage to make this offer to an enemy unless he is confident that he possesses extraordinary prowess. It is clear from these magnificent deeds that Śrī Rāma is all-powerful and that he is conscious of his might. But he endures all these ordeals not because he is unable to kill him with a mere exercise of his volition but that his magnanimity and fortitude might shine all

the more prominently. Śrī Rāma's intention is only to mend Rāvaṇa and not to kill him unless it becomes absolutely necessary. That is why he spares him for so long a time, although thereby he exposes himself to several troubles.

The crane that Kṛṣṇa has killed is the vice of pretentiousness (Dambha). Rāvaṇa is the ego; and the ego (Ahamkāra) is more dangerous than pretentiousness. It is the ego that makes one what one is not. It is the ego that creates the idea that this body is the self. With that thought, the relationship between the self and the Supreme Self becomes distant. This is what is implied in Rāvaṇa carrying off Sita. So long as the ego exists, virtuous qualities, however manifold they be, fade into insignificance. If a single drop of poison is put in grape-juice contained in a goblet of gold, the whole drink becomes unacceptable. In a similar way, a little ego is enough to render futile all the virtues and all the knowledge that a person possesses. This ego must be eradicated and the Supreme only can do it. Doing this, He will make the individual selves recognise the relationship that they have with Him.

3. *Kīrti mai pāḍippōy*

Singing the glories of Kṛṣṇa and Rāma, the gōpikas reach the place of the ritual. Unable to refrain from singing their glories, they move forward, the song sustaining them. Rāvaṇa has surrendered to Rāma's prowess and Vibhīṣaṇa to Rāma's character; and Sūrpaṇakha to his beauty. Thus the qualities of Śrī Rāma have the power to make his enemies enamoured of him. No need to say how the women who love him and cannot bear separation from him feel towards him. Men who are subject to the bondage of birth-and-death and who rebel against God and declare their independence, come to realise their lapse and crave for His succour and sing: "Namō Nārāyaṇāya: Nothing is mine, everything is yours." Likewise, the gōpikās lose themselves in singing the glory of God who has helped them by putting an end to Baka and Rāvaṇa, the demons of Dumbha and Ahamkāra, who have tried to bring about their separation from the Lord.

The reputation of Śrī Rāma as warrior does not lie in his killing Rāvaṇa. It is reflected, rather, in the way he treats Rāvaṇa, when the latter stands alone, defenceless on the battle-field, with his horses dead, his chariot smashed and his bow broken:—

*“Gacchānu jānāmi ranārdi tastvam pravīṣya rātrimchara rāja
Lankān aśvāsyā niryāhi rathī sadhanvī.*

O demon King! you are tired in battle. I give you leave to depart. Go into Lanka. Take rest. And then come back equipped with a good bow and in a new chariot.” Rāma’s nobility is revealed in this chivalry of releasing the enemy who has fallen helpless into his hands. Thinking of this episode, how could any one withhold praise from him? The gōpikas, recalling to mind the nobility of Kṛṣṇa and Rāma, glorify them and feel rejoiced that their killing Baka and Rāvaṇa respectively has been for their sake only. Unable to contain their happiness, they express it in song; and it is that song that gives strength and steadiness to their gait. “Pāthōyam Pundarikākṣa nāma sankīrtanāmṛtam: The nectar of the song glorifying His names is what they carry with them for nourishment on their way.”

4. *Piḷḷai gaḷ ellārum pāvaikkaḷam pukkār:*

“All the girls have reached the place of ritual.”

The gōpikas reach the venue, previously determined, for meeting Kṛṣṇa. This place is called Kālakṣēpa Kūṭam.” “Kālakṣēpam” does not mean ‘idling time.’ “Kāla” means “death.” Separation from God is death. Kālakṣēpa means distancing this separation; that is, coming close to God. The place fixed for meeting the Lord is the Kālakṣēpakūṭam. Now they invite the gōpika within to wake up and come out to join them. But she tells them that the other girls in their eagerness to meet Kṛṣṇa may have gone there long before the dawn. Their going there cannot be taken as a sign of dawn. She wishes to know if they can point to any other sign.

5. *Veḷḷi yeḷundu viyāḷam uraṅgittu:*

“Venus has risen; Jupiter is set.” As they belong to the gōpāla community, they are in the habit of determining the passage of time by the rising and setting of stars. They have heard that the rising of Venus is a sign of daybreak and so mention it, and not because they have had knowledge about the stars. The rising of Venus and the setting of Jupiter signify that pure knowledge is

arising and ignorance is fading out. Venus and Jupiter respectively symbolise 'knowledge' and 'ignorance.' Venus is the preceptor of demons. He holds the secret art of reviving the dead. Hence he is identified with knowledge. This secret art protects us from separation from the limiting adjunct of the body. To be in eternal union with God is to have deathless life, and this comes from knowledge. The rising of Venus signifies the emergence of knowledge. Jupiter is the preceptor of the celestials. But he is also the propagator of atheism propounded by Chārvāka. So his setting signifies the subsidence of ignorance.

There is a different way of interpreting this. "The thought has sprouted in us to acquire knowledge through the spiritual instruction of a preceptor. But the time is coming when that good thought may get clouded by the spreading ignorance. You must rise and save us before the urge for knowledge perishes under the influence of time, and ignorance holds full sway." It is to bring out this idea that the gōpikas refer to Venus and Jupiter. Jupiter symbolises the Divine affluence and Venus the Demoniak. The Demoniak elements are coming up; that is, ignorance is flourishing; and the divine elements are subsiding; that is knowledge is languishing. You must come to our rescue before it is too late."

The girl within is not satisfied. She is of the opinion that because the gōpikas always desire union with Kṛṣṇa, they think that it is always dawn; and all the stars appear to them as Venus and Jupiter. So she is not convinced that this can be taken as a true symbol of dawn. Then the gōpikas mention another sign.

6. *Puḷḷum ṣilumbina gāṇ :*

"The birds are chirping."

Reference has been made to the clamour of birds in Pāṣurams VI and VII and is made again in this Pāṣuram. The noise made by birds as soon as they wake up is mentioned in VI; and in VII is described the sound caused by mutual exchange of parting-words of the awakened birds before they leave their nests. In this Pāṣuram, reference is made to the sound made by the birds as they roam about in search of food. These birds are the āchāryas. Those sages who ever abide in spiritual experiences are unable to contain them within themselves and spontaneously express them

in words as they wake up. That is the clamour in Pāṣuram VI. Before they part from each other they recount their experiences for mutual benefit; that is the sound in Pāṣuram VII. In this Pāṣuram (XIII), the sound refers to the imparting of spiritual instruction by sages to their disciples. This is their sustenance, their life itself; and they move about in search of aspirants. The gōpikas urge their companion to rise and join them: "While the sages are thus going about and imparting to others their experiences, which they are unable to contain within themselves, it is unfair that you shut yourself up in isolation and remain mute, keeping to yourself all your experience." Still, the gōpika within ignores their pleas and lies still. They then think that the reason for her indifference towards them is her pride in having beautiful eyes. Now they praise the beauty of her eyes.

7. *Pōdari kkaṇṇi nāy*

O Girl! with eyes like lotuses enfolding bees within;

O Girl! with eyes competing with lotuses;

O Girl! with eyes like the deer's with wandering looks.

The word "ari" carries three meanings: bee, deer and enemy. "Pōdu ari kaṇ" Lotus-eyed or deer-eyed or with eyes resembling the bees in the lotus. In beauty, her eyes compete with the lotus-flower; in quick-moving looks, her eyes compete with the deer's.

A prominent feature of the Supreme Self is the beauty of His eyes. His name is "Pundarikākṣa—One whose eyes are like lotuses. Ānjanēya begins his description of Rāma thus: "Rāmaḥ kamala patrākṣaḥ: Rāma has eyes resembling lotuses." He starts with the description of the beauty of his eyes. Sīta who has dark eyes, asitēkṣaṇa, deserves to have for her husband the beautiful lotus-eyed Śrī Rāma. Captivated by the beauty of her eyes, Śrī Rāma himself goes to where Sīta is; she has not gone to him. The gōpika within seems to feel that Kṛṣṇa must go to her and not she to him. Such is her pride in her beauty.

Comparison is here instituted between the eye and (1) the lotus-flower (2) the bee in the lotus and (3) the looks of the deer. The lotus is born in mud, lives in water, and draws sustenance from water; and its flower faces the sun that shines in the sky.

The flower blossoms in sunshine and folds up in its absence. Living in the bondage of Non-self (Samsāra) with a body that is sustained by material things of the world, the self looks up to the Supreme. It blooms with spiritual experience so long as it has the vision of the Supreme; and folds up in His absence. To have this knowledge of the influence of the Supreme on the self, is to possess an eye like lotus.

The feet of Śrīmannārāyaṇa are lotus-flowers. To make them a permanent habitation and to suck the sweet juice flowing from them and to get intoxicated and drowsy like the bees, is to possess the eye of knowledge (which resembles the bee in the lotus).

The eyes of the deer are ever unsteady and the looks always wandering. That kind of unsteadiness makes for beauty in the eyes of woman. Even though an aspirant has perfect spiritual experience, there is an apprehension, caused by his excessive love for the Lord, that some danger may befall that experience; and it is this anxious fear that keeps the mind alert and the eyes wandering. This is to possess eyes that resembles the deer's.

The description of the beauty of eyes indicates one particular type of worship. The Upaniṣad propounds a kind of worship of Śrīmannārāyaṇa who is immanent in the centre of the sun in a particular form. This worship is known as antarāditya vidya. The Puruṣa who appears in the centre of Sūryamaṇḍala (Zone of the Sun) has a body of glistening gold; he shines with golden beard, golden moustache and golden nails. "Hiraṇyaśmaśruḥ hiraṇya nakṣaḥ āpraṇakhāt sarva ēva suvarṇaḥ.") Again, that Puruṣa is bright with eyes resembling a red lotus in fresh bloom which has sprouted from deep waters with a strong stalk." (*Yathā kapyāsam pundarikamēva makṣiṇī*). By worshipping that Puruṣa, that gōpika could have eyes resembling His; and that feature is referred to in their address to her. It is Nārāyaṇa, the Puruṣa in the Centre of the orb of the Sun that is adored through Gāyatrī mantra. As she has set the bee of her mind on the Puruṣa propounded by the Gāyatrī, she has eyes resembling the bee in the lotus. As long as the bee roams around the lotus, it makes a buzzing sound; but once it enters the flower and sucks in the juice, it becomes silent. Those who are deeply immersed in spiritual experience, likewise, become mute. Childhood is characterised by unsteady-

ness. The unsteadiness in her looks, which resemble those of a deer, indicate her childhood. The three dominant characteristics of those who abide in spiritual experience are: scholarship, childhood and silence. To say that she has eyes resembling lotus is to suggest her scholarship; to say that she has eyes resembling the eyes of a deer is to signify her childhood. To say that she has eyes resembling the bee in the lotus is to indicate her silence. The girl they are awakening is one who is immersed in perfect consciousness of God.

8. *Kuḷḷak kuḷirak kuḍaindu niraḍāḍē paḷḷi kkiḍattiyo*

“Why do you still lie in bed? Why not immerse yourself in cool refreshing waters?”

“Should you not have a bath to mitigate the torment caused by separation from Kṛṣṇa? Even if the waters are a little warm, you will have no relief; and if the sun’s rays fall on them, the waters get heated and they fail to cool us. So while it is still dark and long before the day breaks, we must take the bath so as to feel cool and refreshed. Get up and let us go now and have the bath. Tormented by separation from Rāma, Bharata used to go to Sarayu river about midnight and take a bath to bring down his misery. Likewise, why do you not bathe to mitigate your pangs and to help to reduce our suffering? Is the beauty of your eyes meant to keep you isolated in bed? With that beauty, capture Śrī Kṛṣṇa and enthrall him. Bathe in the meditation of his qualities, and fully immerse yourself in the stream issuing from the sweet and exhilarating showers of his charming personality. Having thus refreshed yourself, bring us relief. Our words are too feeble to describe your beauty. We take refuge in your beauty to secure for us Kṛṣṇa’s goodwill. With your enchanting beauty, you may have long ago joined Kṛṣṇa, participated in the sports and pastimes in the waters of Yamuna and rested on his lap. It is not up to you to rest on a bed, smelling its fragrance and feeling its thrill, under the impression that it has been once used by Kṛṣṇa. Your situation, unfortunately, is similar to one who, having heaps of rice everywhere, turns to begging for alms.

The ‘bath’ here means union with God or enjoyment of contemplation on God’s attributes; and that experience eliminates the pangs of separation from Him. To have this welcome relief

in company with other devotees is what is signified by taking the bath in the dark, long before daybreak. The gōpikas request the girl within to lead them in experiencing God's attributes and in attaining union with Him.

9. *Pāvāy nī*

"O! You embodiment of delicate womanhood!

It is not up to you to experience God's attributes alone in isolation. For your delicate tenderness, you should be with God and should be receiving our services. It is improper for you to rest alone. The very day you became the target of Kṛṣṇa's eye, that very day your womanhood accomplished perfection. You should be ever with him and never by yourself. It is the nature of woman to live with her husband and children and not by herself alone. So be with Kṛṣṇa and graciously help to save us.

10. *Nannāḷāl*

"These days are good." The time is propitious. The very elders, who have been keeping the gōpikas aloof from Kṛṣṇa's sight, have now agreed to their meeting him. In fact, they have specifically desired them to meet him. When the time is so propitious, it is regrettable if they do not join him.

The time when the tendency to purity erupts is the time congenial for spiritual experience. Not to use such days for spiritual effort and to allow them to waste is to be regretted. When Sīta is away in Lanka, Rāma says: "I do not grieve that Sīta is far away from me; nor do I grieve that Rāvaṇa has carried her off. Alas! her youth is wasted; and that sorely grieves me." These words smack of hungry passion. To feel sad that Sīta's youth, which would have given him happiness, is passing, is to express a commonplace sentiment, not worthy of Rāma. But we should go deeper into it to understand its meaning. There are some who, kept away from the Supreme by their ignorance and unable to attain Him, struggle in vain in misery. There are others who, though eligible by their worth for attaining Him, fail and go to ruin. Those in the latter category have the youth that makes them fit to be enjoyed by the Supreme. But as they are away from Him, He grieves for them more intensely than they do for

themselves. It is this idea that is conveyed by Rāma's words that he feels sad that Sīta's youth is wasted. The gōpikas have recognised the worth of the girl within. Though having the fitness to enjoy spiritual experience, she still remains alone by herself. Telling her that it is this aloofness that grieves Śrī Kṛṣṇa, they invite her to join them and enjoy him.

11. *Kaḷḷan davinṭru kalandd ēlōrempāvāy*

"Give up your slyness. Join us."

The cunning of this gōpika consists in her contemplating Kṛṣṇa's attributes and sportive activities and enjoying them in private by herself. It is a clandestine act. The gōpikas blame her: "It is not for your bliss that you enjoy spiritual experience. You indulge in it only for giving us the happiness of looking on your body when you lose yourself in ecstasy with spiritual experience. What right have you to hide that body which is meant to be ours and prevent us from the pleasure of looking on it? It amounts to robbing us of what is ours—that is theft. Isn't it?"

The individual self is the possession of God. To think that it is independent is to steal what is God's. The body of the preceptor who has experienced God is the precious property of his disciples. To hide it from the disciples is as much as stealing their property. That is why the gōpikas exhort her to give up this practice.

The individual self belongs to the Supreme Self. Forgetting this, the self thinks that it has an independent existence. That is a lapse, in as much as it amounts to stealing what is God's. But when God forgives it, the stain is removed. But if the Supreme Self, who is the owner, denies his ownership, there is none who can rectify it. We belong to the devotees of God; we are their property. We may, out of ignorance, forget that we are their possessions; but when our lapses are condoned by them, we become free from stain. But if the devotees of God themselves disown their possessions and snap their relationship with individual selves, who is to forgive their lapse? The mother does not get angry when the child, out of ignorance, declares that it has no relationship with its mother. The mother overlooks this lapse and when the child turns again to her, she gladly welcomes it to her bosom.

But if the mother disowns her child and keeps herself aloof, who is to forgive her? So the gōpikas tell the girl within; "We belong to you, we are your property; your bliss is for us. So show us your body which is thrilled with your bliss and come out and join us. Together we shall enjoy Kṛṣṇa. This is what is right for you to do. Come."

In this Pāsuram, the gōpikas are awakening Periaḷwār. He is known by two other names, Viṣṇuchitta and Bhattanātha. This Bhattanātha is the father of Āṇḍāl. He delights in offering flower-garlands to Vaṭapatraśāyi, the presiding deity of Śrīvilliputtūr. Obeying God's command, he enters into disputation with the scholars of the court of Vallabharāya and establishes the supremacy (Paratwa) of Śrīmannārāyaṇa. Vallabharāya honours him. Bhattanātha is seated on elephant-back and taken in procession. Then he is blessed with the vision of Śrīmannārāyaṇa, with his two consorts, Bhūdēvi and Lakṣmidēvi on either side and all mounted on Garuḍa. Moved to ecstasy by this glorious vision and prompted by excessive love for Him, he sings the "pallāṇḍu" benediction, to avert the evil eye. 'Om' is uttered before the recital of the Vēdas. In the same way, this Pallāṇḍu benediction is recited before the Tamil Divya Prabandhās are read. As Bhattanātha is a great saint who has visioned the auspicious form of the Divine, he is presented in this Pāsuram as a gōpika with beautiful eyes.

By describing that the eyes are like lotuses, it is made clear that the eyes of Bhattanātha open fully when he sees the Supreme; and close when worldly pleasures present themselves. As he is constantly disturbed by his anxiety, born of excessive love, about the safety of the Supreme, his eyes shoot forth wandering looks like those of a deer. As he is Viṣṇuchitta, who has set his mind steadily on the feet of the Supreme, his eyes are compared to the bee enfolded in the lotus. As his conduct proclaims, there is no trace of pretentiousness and ego in him; to indicate this, the gōpikas glorify Kṛṣṇa who has killed Bakāsura, and Rāma who has killed

Rāvaṇa. To show that, by God's grace, ignorance has perished and knowledge bloomed in him, reference is made to the setting of Jupiter and the rising of Venus. From the situation presented, and the ways in which the girl is addressed, it is clear that Periālwār is awakened in this Pāṣuram.



PĀŚURAM XIV

PREFACE.

A gōpika who has promised to get up early and awaken the other girls and who is capable of being the leader of the company, remains asleep; and the party comes to her to awaken her. Losing herself in complete spiritual experience, she forgets her promise and stays at home. She has a garden behind her house; and in it there is a well with steps leading to the waters; lotuses and tulips flourish in the waters. The gōpika is lost in contemplation.

The methods adopted to acquire valid knowledge are called "pramāṇas." These methods are 1. direct perception (pratyakṣa) 2. inferential perception (anumāna); and 3. Śabda pramāṇa or friend's testimony (āpta vākya). The knowledge derived from the experience of the senses comes under 'direct perception.' Knowledge acquired by seeing an object with the eye, hearing a sound with the ear, smelling with the nose, touching with the body, tasting with the tongue, is direct knowledge.

Sometimes the sense has no connection with the object; yet by knowing the relationship of cause with effect, the cause is guessed by looking at the consequence. This knowledge is attained by 'inferential perception.' Fire and smoke have cause-effect relationship. When one is there, the other also is there. Where there is smoke, there must be fire. There can be no smoke without fire. When those who know this connection see the smoke, they conclude that there is fire there, though they do not see the fire. This is inferential knowledge.

Sometimes, knowledge of a thing is acquired by trustfully accepting the word of a friend about it; and this is called (illuminated knowledge) Śabdajñāna. A friend's testimony is the basis of this knowledge. A friend is one who speaks without misapprehension (bhrama) and lapse of memory (pramāda); and he speaks to promote our interests. But in this world there is none who is completely free from misapprehension and lapse of memory. The all-knowing

(omniscient) Lord, and sages who, by His grace, have received luminous knowledge, can alone count as true friends. The Vēdas and other scriptures which have emanated from them come under this third category, illumined knowledge, Śabda Jñāna. The Vēdāntins accept all the three modes; the Chārvākas, who are atheists, accept only direct perception; the Buddhists accept both direct perception and inferential perception. The gōpikas being Vēdāntins, accept all the three methods of knowledge. The gōpikas have given evidence for dawn; they have mentioned what they have directly perceived, what they have seen and heard, and also what they have inferred. In this Pāsuram they accept as valid the word of a reliable friend of theirs; and thus prove their stand as Vēdāntins. To them daybreak signifies rise of knowledge. They accept direct perception and inferential perception as methods of valid knowledge, so long as they are not contrary to the scriptures. In this Pāsuram, they show that they recognise the dawn or the rise of knowledge by all three methods—of direct and inferential perceptions and of trustful acceptance of friend's testimony, which is based on illumined knowledge, inspiration or intuition.

In order to attain to the vision of God all the three—*śravaṇa* reverential hearing; *manana*, meditation; and *nidhidhyāsa*, steady contemplation—are considered as methods. Of them, *nidhidhyāsa*, steady contemplation, is considered as the most important or primary method. It enables the aspirant to have the vision of his objective with the clarity of direct perception. The method of meditation promotes the steadiness of the mind. The method of reverential hearing removes folly and enables wisdom to emerge. These states are exemplified in the ten gōpikas that are awakened. In Pāsurams VI and VII, the state of hearing is presented. The feelings of attachment and hatred, which cling to the mind, are eliminated by hearing; that the mind is purified of them is shown in Pāsuram VIII. The conditions of the gōpikas in Pāsurams IX to XII indicate the state of meditation and how gradually the intellect has gained in strength. In the XIII and XIV Pāsurams, the gōpikas who are in a state of steady contemplation are awakened. Steady contemplation alone is true worship.

Worship takes several forms:—Adoring an external object; adoring the One who is immanent in objects. In Pasuram XIII the gōpika is said to be worshipping Śrīmannārāyaṇa as installed

in the centre of the sun's orb. The gōpika of this Pasuram (XIV) is worshipping the Lord immanent in her heart. This last mode of worship is known as Dahara Vidya.

*Daharam vipāpmam paravēṣma bhūtam
Yat punḍarikam puramadhya samstham.*

"The lotus situated in the central part of the body is sinless and subtle and is the abode of the Supreme Self"—thus declares the Upaniṣad. This body is the city. The Supreme Self assumes a subtle form and with the name Dahara takes up His abode in the heart of the body of the adorer so as to do him favour. To worship Him is called Dahara vidya. When worshipping Him, the devotee adores not only Him but also His attributes. Such worship is called 'Pūrṇopāsana'—Full worship. The gōpika of today is in the garden to the rear of the house, observing the lotuses and tulips in the well. From this we may infer that she is engaged in Daharōpāsana, the worship of the Lord residing in the heart. As she is addressed as 'the perfect one' Pūrṇurālā, it is clear that she has reached ripeness or perfection in worship by adoring God and His qualities. The gōpikas awaken such a leader and such an adorer today.

*Uṅgaḷ pulaiikkaḍai ttōṭṭattu vāviyuḷ
ṣeṅgaḷunir vāynegiḷndu āmbalvāykūmbinagāṇ
ṣeṅgaḷ poḍikkūrai veṇbal tavattavar
taṅgaḷ tirukkōyil ṣaṅgiḍuvān pōginṛār
eṅgaḷai munnam eḷuppuvān vāypēṣum
naṅgāy! eḷundirāy nāṇādāy! nāvuḍaiyāy
ṣaṅgoḍu ṣakkara mendum taḍakkaiyan
paṅgayakkaṇṇāmai ppāḍēḷō rempāvāy.*

Summary.

The gōpika who has pledged to awaken them all for the bath has failed to do so and is lying still; she is now awakened by the others.

“O perfect one in worship! The red lotuses in the well situated in the garden to the rear of the house are blooming; and the black tulips are folding up. Arise! The ascetics who have fine sets of white teeth and who are filled with a spirit of renunciation have put on their ochre robes and are going to their temples for worship. Arise! You have pledged your word that you will yourself come and wake us up. Have you forgotten it? O shameless girl! Get up! O adroit talker! Come out to sing the glory of the Lord of the lotus-eyes and long arms, who holds the conch and the disc in his hands.

Commentary.

1. *Uṅgaḷ puḷaikkadaittottattu vāviyul*
śeṅgaḷunīrvāy negiḷṇdu āmbal vāy kūmbinagān

“The red lotuses in the well in the garden in your backyard are blooming. The dark tulips are folding up. The day is breaking and we are standing at your door. How is it you do not wake up?” In reply, the gōpika in the garden says: “from what sign do you say it is dawn?” The party replies: “The blooming of the lotus and the folding up of the tulip—does not this sight indicate the advent of dawn?” Then comes the gōpika’s reply: “You have come to my door with love; and that love has opened your eyes wide; and so you think that lotuses are blooming. As I remain inert and not talk to you, your faces shrink, and so you think that the tulips are folding up. The dawn has not arrived”. Then the callers resume the argument by saying: “We do not speak of the blooming and the shrinking of the flowers in the village; we refer only to the flowers in your well.” Pat comes the reply: “It shows that they have not bloomed or folded of their own accord; you are forcing them to bloom or fold. The gōpikas are ready with the rejoinder: “The garden in your rear yard does not permit even sunshine to enter it. If the lotuses in your well have blossomed and the tulips have folded, it is because of the ripeness of time and not under compulsion from any quarter.” Having seen these flowers bloom or shrink in fields outside, the gōpikas infer that those in her garden also do likewise. Even if the sunshine does not penetrate to where they are located, it is a natural instinct for flowers to bloom or shrink according to the

passage of time. Śrī Rāma is in Mālyavanta, suffering pangs of separation from Sītā. It is the rainy season; and as the clouds overcast the sky, it is difficult to know how far the day has advanced. But he comes to know that the sun has set from the sight of the blooming buds of mālātī creeper, of the shrinking petals of the lotuses and of the returning flight of the birds to their nests. 'Vikāsam tyacha mālātī nīmēlascha pankajaiḥ nīlīyamānaiḥ vihagaiḥ.' In a similar way, even if the sunshine cannot penetrate into her garden, the lotuses and the tulips bloom or shrink at the appropriate times in a natural way.

Finding the gōpika unmoved by what they have said, the callers aim at provoking her by saying "your garden." They think that the word "your" will shock her into awareness of her condition. Those who cultivate the presence of God believe that they belong to God and are entirely dependent on Him. To those people who have knowledge of their selves, the thought of "I" and "mine," ego and possessiveness, is unacceptable. They feel upset and distressed if any thing is said to be "theirs." They believe that their selves belong to God or to God's devotees. To think of them as their own makes them miserable. "Dwyakṣarastu bhavēn mrutyuḥ: Death consists in two letters: '*mama*' (mine);" and eternal life in three letters: '*na mama*' (not mine). The think of them as their own makes them miserable. "Dwyakṣarastu bhavēn mrutyuḥ: Death consists in two letters: '*mama*' (mine); and eternal life in three letters: '*na mama*' (not mine). The Ājwārs are ever afraid of uttering the words "I" and "mine," when they give spiritual instruction to others. Instead, they use the words, "You" and "yours," "nīr," "numadu," and tell their disciples to give up the notions of 'I' and 'mine' completely. Knowing this secret, the gōpikas deliberately say, "*your garden*," hoping that the girl will be shocked on hearing it and come out of her self-absorption.

Though ego ("I") and possessiveness ("mine") are to be relinquished, they are not to be given up at all times. The feelings of 'I' and 'mine,' which emerge from the identification of body with self, are to be ruthlessly eliminated. But when the same feelings sprout out of relationship with God, they are not to be relinquished. "O Changeless One, I am yours; whatever is *mine* is yours." In this avowal, there is nothing wrong in saying "I"

and "mine." In declaring 'I am a devotee of Viṣṇu,' there is nothing blamable; in fact, having such attachment is to be cherished; it makes for greatness. The gōpika in the garden is not perturbed by their remark, "*your* garden," because she is of the belief that all that is hers is His.

This gōpika is worshipping the Immanent One. The Supreme Self instals Himself in a subtle form in the lotus-shaped nerve-centre located in the heart (Hṛdaya puṇḍarīka). According to the Tantra Śāstra, the worshipper has to bring under control all the lotus-shaped centres of consciousness and concentrate that chaitanya (consciousness) on the heart-centre and meditate on the Immanent One. This body itself is a garden; that is, it is the base of enjoyment. The nerve-system through which consciousness flows is encased in the spinal column. All the strains (tāpās), caused to the body by the play of physical ills (Ādhyātmika), by the actions of wild beasts or venomous creatures (Ādhibhoutika) and by the fury of elemental forces (Ādhidaivika) subside, as the yōgis move about in this column of consciousness. This column of consciousness is the *well* with steps leading to the waters. The lotuses in it are the nerve-centres, (Nāḍī chakrās) also called Padmās. These centres are called: Mūlādhāra; swādhīṣṭhāna; maṇipura; anāhata; viāuddha; ājñā; and sahasrāra. To say that 'the lotuses have bloomed' is to indicate that 'these centres of consciousness are illumined.' Sūrya (sun) stands for knowledge; sunshine makes the lotuses bloom; and knowledge illumines the centres of consciousness. The tulips represent the senses which give pleasure by playing on material objects. The tulips are shrinking. That is as much as to say that an attitude of renunciation of sense-pleasures has been formed. The gōpika that is awakened today has knowledge and renunciation and is in a state of steady contemplation. This idea is brought out in the statement that the lotuses in the well in the rear garden have blossomed and the tulips have folded their petals.

This girl is completely engrossed in enjoying Kṛṣṇa and is having a stroll with him in the garden. The gōpikas who call on her indicate that they are aware of it, by making the observation about the lotuses and tulips. Kṛṣṇa comes behind her, covers her eyes with his hands, bends his head over hers, makes his eyes wide and drinks in her beauty. Then her eyes become tulips; and

they close. His eyes are lotuses; and they open wide. It is usual to liken the eyes of a woman to tulips and those of a man to lotuses. That she has closed her eyes in the ecstasy of her union with the lotus-eyed Kṛṣṇa is here indicated.

This gōpika has been able to figure out Śrīmannārāyaṇa in her meditation; and now the same form directly appears before her and she enjoys this vision. This is signified by the comparison of the eyes of Śrī to tulips and those of Nārāyaṇa to the lotuses; that the eyes of both are together installed in her heart is recognised by the gōpikas, when they refer to the presence of both tulips and lotuses in the well.

The individual self has three types of kinship with the Supreme Self: (1) It belongs to the Supreme and to no other (2) It has no other means of attaining Him than Himself (3) It is to be enjoyed by Him and by no other. These three are called 'Ākaratraya' for the self—*ananya śeṣatva*, *ananya śaraṇatva*, *ananya bhōgyatva*. To know this triple-alliance is to have true knowledge of the self. And this knowledge is what one gets by the constant recital of the great incantation of Aṣṭākṣari. This incantation, Tirumantra, is represented by the garden. Strolling about in this garden gives happiness to the self. The middle word of this incantation is "namaḥ." The well which has steps leading to the waters represents that word 'namaḥ.' The rebellious spirit of independence which prompts the self to think that he can save himself is washed off by the waters of the well. Then the spirit of entire dependence on Him becomes manifest. The spirit of independence which is caused by ignorance is likened to the tulip that blossoms in the night. This is now shrunk. Humility of dependence is like the lotus. It shines by the knowledge of the self and of the Supreme Self. Knowledge is the sun. The conviction that the self is dependent on the Supreme Self is compared to the lotus that blooms in the sun. The lotus has opened its petals wide. The girl in the garden has the knowledge of self and has attained the stage of complete dependence on Him. The gōpikas recognise that the girl has reached that state of illumination and tell her that they too know that state. They imply this in giving it out as a symbol of dawn.

The girl continues the argument: "You are hasty in your conclusion that the lotuses have bloomed and the tulips have folded. They have just begun to do so. Lotuses are not in full bloom; tulips are not completely shrunk. The day has not broken completely. It is only in the initial stage and it cannot be taken as a characteristic of dawn. Those who have just tasted spiritual experience think that even in that initial stage they have reached the fulness of it. But that is no sign of acquiring a true, steady and full knowledge. So the gōpikas advance another sign of dawn.

Starting with the declaration that they accept the three *pramāṇas*, modes of acquiring knowledge, they first deal with inferential perception. Seeing that at dawn lotuses bloom and tulips fold everywhere, they infer that the same must be true of the lotuses and tulips in the garden of this girl. From this, it is clear that they have accepted the inferential method (*anumāna*). They accept direct and inferential perceptions, provided they do not conflict with the scriptures. Now they point out a sign which is directly perceived (*pratyakṣa*).

2. *ṣeṅgal poḍikkūrai veṇbal tavattavar*

taṅgaḷ tirukkōyil ṣaṅgiḍuvān pōḷinṛ

"The ascetics who have donned robes coloured red by the application of the powder of ochre stone and who have white teeth, are going for worship to their temples, carrying implements to open the doors. It is dawn. Get up."

One interpretation of these lines is not complimentary to the ascetics. The ascetics are not genuine ascetics; they are fakes. They indulge in sense-pleasures during night; but at break of day, they clean their teeth white, put on ochre robes and proceed to the temples just to show that they are true worshippers. The point here is that even such counterfeit ascetics (*tāmasic sanyāsins*) have risen from sleep and are going to the temples. The gōpikas seem to suggest that when such is the case with false devotees, true worshippers cannot lie still in bed. "Won't you get up?"

There is another interpretation which takes the ascetics to be genuine worshippers of God. Tradition demands that only pure ascetics should be assigned authority over worship at the temples.

Following that tradition, ascetics (Jīyars) are the authorities to conduct worship in sacred places like Tirupati and Śrīrangam even today. In the early hours before dawn, they go to the temples carrying the implements, designed to open the temple doors. So their hastening to temples is mentioned as a sign of dawn. It is dangerous to entrust the trusteeship of temples to worldly-minded and self-indulgent people. *Māthāpatyam yaṭiḥ kuryāt*: Only ascetics should have command over mathās or religious institutions and places of worship. They wear ochre robes; their teeth are pearl-white. Renunciation of worldly pleasures is here indicated. Chewing betel is a practice connected with amorous self-indulgence. Giving up the practice keeps the teeth white. To indicate that the mind has turned away from sense-pleasures and is deeply attached to the Supreme, the ascetics don the ochre robes. That the body is like a garment which wears out is understood from a stanza in the Gīta: (*Vāsāmsi jīrṇāni yadhā vihāya*). The whole world, sentient and insentient, belongs to the Supreme and carries out all the affairs under His direction and for His glory. It is His body. To think that it is 'mine' is attachment. To think it is 'His and not mine' is renunciation. The mind is the principal instrument to bring about this detachment.

("Mana ēva manuṣyāṇām kārāṇam bandhamōkṣayōḥ")": Mind is the cause of bondage to men and also of liberation. The mind which is attached to objects of sense, binds; the mind which is detached from these objects, liberates. The mind that is attached to the objects of senses is likened to a red ochre stone. Clothes are dipped in a solution obtained by grinding this ochre-stone to powder and dissolving it in water; and these clothes are worn by ascetics. This ochre-stone is the mind that turns away from God. Attachment to sense-objects is the red colour. Grinding the stone to powder indicates the disintegration of that mind with the true knowledge that the self is entirely dependent on the Supreme. Dissolving the powder in water signifies the absorption of the disintegrated mind in the knowledge of the nature and attributes of God and of all things having close kinship with Him. 'Putting on the ochre-robes' implies 'having a mind which, filled with love of God and of His splendour, finds bliss in losing itself in God-consciousness. The ascetics now on their way to the temples are great devotees who have donned such ochre-robes.

The second sign by which these ascetics are marked out is the possession of white teeth. This indicates the renunciation of all objects of sense-pleasures. Mouth is used for eating and speaking. Purity in both these occupations, of eating and speaking, is symbolised by white teeth. Clean food helps the emergence of the tendency to purity (Sattwaguṇa) in antaḥkaraṇa, the organ of inner perception. It is only then that an opportunity opens for devotion to set in. It is only food that brings about changes in the proportions in which the three guṇas (fundamental tendencies) blend in the body. The mind is the principal instrument of spiritual experience; and the mind is formed by what we eat. The solid and indissoluble part of the food is eliminated from the body. The more soluble part of it forms the blood and the flesh, the bones and the nerves. The essence, the most vital part, becomes the mind itself. If there is more of Sattwaguṇa in the articles of diet taken in, the mind too becomes purer and more suitable for spiritual experience. White teeth signify that the food taken is quite pure. The devotees observe certain restraints in regard to speech. Divine utterances help meditation. To have white teeth is to be pure in speech as well. Detachment from sense-objects, attachment to the Supreme Self, eating clean food and engaging in pure speech—these exercises help people to acquire true knowledge. Such people will be engrossed in meditation on God. Going to the temple for worship here signifies the worship of the Immanent One. The disciples will learn about the Supreme Being, who is immanent in the heart, through the spiritual instruction of their preceptor. This 'instruction' is indicated by the instrument, Kunchekola, used for opening the temple-doors. The Supreme, immanent in our hearts, is hidden by the doors of 'ego' and 'possessiveness,' 'I' and 'mine.' The āchārya opens these doors with his instruction and helps the mind to concentrate on the Immanent One.

While imparting this spiritual instruction, the preceptors adopt a particular posture of the fingers, known as upadēśa mudra. This upadēśa mudra is represented by the instrument, Kunchekola, which is used for opening the temple doors. There is a special technical meaning underlying this mudra. The three fundamental qualities are symbolised by the little finger, the ring-finger and the middle finger; the individual self by the forefinger; and the Supreme

Self by the thumb. Upadēśamudra is formed when the tip of the forefinger touches the tip of the thumb and the other three fingers stand apart. The essence of the instruction of the āchārya is to bring the individual self and the Supreme Self together and to keep the three fundamental qualities segregated from them. The preceptors are those who have completely renounced all worldly pleasures, and who can, by their instruction, impart fitness to their disciples to worship the Supreme. Such preceptors are the ascetics mentioned in this Pāsuram. Those who surrender their all to the Lord (Prapannas) are the greatest among men of penance (Tapaś-śāluru). The Prapannas are the supplicants who, knowing that works, knowledge, and devotion are considered as instruments leading to Him, give them up, with the conviction that He alone is the means of attaining Him. This is known as saraṇāgati, prapatti, nyāsam—supplication, surrender, renunciation. Of all types of austere penances, renunciation is the greatest. The Upaniṣad says: “Nyāsamēśām tapasām variṣṭa māhuḥ” So men of penance are to be taken as identical with supplicants who surrender their all and seek refuge in God. It is such supplicants, prapannās, that are now going to their respective temples for worship. The dawn is approaching and the gōpikas ask the girl to get up.

But the girl replies: “To say that it is dawn because men of austere penance are preparing for worship is not correct. Supplicants for refuge engage themselves in worship at all times; and reluctant to leave Him even for a moment, go on glorifying Him all the time. The Gīta says: ‘Satatam kīrtayantaḥ,’ ‘nitya yuktā upāsatē. In answer to this observation of the gōpika, the callers adduce her own words as evidence of dawn.

3. *Eṅgaḷai munna meḷuppuvūn vāy pēṣum naṅgāy*

“You, perfect one, who pledged your word to awaken us first.” “You promised to wake us up first at daybreak. To us your word is Pramāṇa, authority. The practice of the elders is a more valid authority than even the scripture. *yadyadācharati śrēṣṭhaḥ tattadēvētarōjanaḥ*:

Whatever the great men do, the others also do.’ They set the example and others follow it. So you must get up and make your conduct the ideal for us to follow. Have you forgotten

your promise that you will wake us up? We pin our faith to your word. You know we accept śabda pramāṇa, the valid authority of word." Bhāgavata has declared that Kaliyuga will witness the descent of several sages for the purpose of establishing righteousness in the world. These preceptors are to rouse us from the sleep caused by the beginningless Māya (Illusion). When such is the case, it is improper for you to lie still and to remain mute. You have made a promise, but you have not kept it. That shows that your words have not come from your heart. Saying one thing and doing a different thing—have you imbibed this quality of inconsistency from Kṛṣṇa? No wonder, perennial friendship with him must have made you an expert in the art of speaking lies.

You are the 'perfect one.' Should we not be with you to make you the 'perfect one'? Mere experience of God does not make for fulness. Fulness comes only when you establish relationship with us. Have you forgotten what you have said that you cannot endure separation from us? The preceptors remain imperfect, however rich they may be in their spiritual output and experience. They become perfect only when they forge relationship with disciples who are worthy of receiving spiritual instruction. Spiritual experience becomes perfect, only when association is established with other devotees and aspirants. Mere relationship with husband does not bestow perfection on woman. Womanhood reaches fulness or perfection in motherhood—that is, with children.

4. *Eḷundirāy*

"Arise, come. Supply what we lack."

5. *Nūṇādāy nāvudai yāy*

"O shameless girl! O adroit talker! Get up." Are you feeling ashamed that you could not come early and wake us up? No, do not feel that way. By your constant association with Śrī Rāma you may have developed a feeling of bashful embarrassment. When the Rṣīs come to Śrī Rāma in Daṇḍakāraṇya and seek his protection, Śrī Rāma feels embarrassed and apologises to them: "Alas, I should have myself gone to you, venerable ones, and given you protection. Instead, I have unwittingly allowed time

to slip till you come to me and tell me of your troubles. I feel deeply ashamed of my lapse." Could it be that, in a similar way, you are feeling ashamed that we have come to you, while you should have come to us? But remember that it is in your nature to help those who depend on you. So it is up to you to get over this embarrassment." The Śruti says that, while giving, a person should give befitting his status and wealth: 'Śriyādēyam, hriyādēyam.' If he fails to do so, he must feel unhappy that what he has given is not befitting his prosperity. The gōpikas ask her whether she is feeling embarrassed that she has failed to give them what she ought to have given.

In addressing her first as the "perfect one" and then as the "shameless one," they refer to her prapatti niṣṭa, her abiding fervour of complete surrender to God. Those who believe in God as the Saviour, give up their strength and sense of shame and modesty and make no effort to save themselves. They are of strong conviction that they will be saved by God's strength only. When Duṣṣāsana attempts to disrobe Draupadi in the open court, Draupadi, who has strong faith in Kṛṣṇa as the Saviour, finally gives up all effort to save her honour, and setting aside all sense of shame raises both her hands invoking his intercession. Until one gets complete faith in God as the only refuge, one cannot get courage to give up shame. As this gōpika has reached that stage of total surrender she is addressed as the 'perfect one' and as the 'shameless one.'

She has ripe spiritual experience in abundance; and she does not hide it nor hoard it; she imparts it to others. Hence she becomes the perfect one, and one who is not ashamed of herself. It is a matter for shame for a man to enjoy all his prosperity himself without sharing it with others. Or the gōpikas may be pointing out slyly that having such ripe spiritual experience, she enjoys it all, without shame, by herself and does not share it with others. To underline this, they address her as the "shameless one."

They taunt her as "an adroit talker"; and then to obviate the gōpika's question as to why, ridiculing her, they have still approached her, they tell her that it is the power inherent in her words that has attracted them there; that has made her company indispensable for them. Hence she is "an adroit talker."

Hanumān meets Śrī Rāma and gives an account of Sugrīva's life and acquaints himself with Śrī Rāma's life. Śrī Rāma praises Hanumān's way of talking: "Hanumān must have carefully studied Rig Vēda, Yajurvēda and Sāmavēda; he must have mastered grammar. Otherwise, he could not have spoken as he has done." Hanumān meets Sīta in Lanka and narrates the story of Śrī Rāma's life in a manner that sounds sweet in her ears. He makes an impressive speaker by his scholarship and mastery of words. The gōpikas know that the words of the girl within are replete with scholarship and sweetness; and so they address her as an "adroit talker." Whatever troubles they undergo, they are unable to give up her company because of her dexterity in speech.

By addressing her in these three ways (the perfect woman, the shameless woman, and the adroit talker) the gōpikas indicate that she has all the qualities of an āchārya (Preceptor), fulness in spiritual experience, readiness to unveil that experience to others without hesitation, and capacity of lucid exposition in imparting to others. Only those who have these three qualities deserve to be āchāryas. And this gōpika possesses them. The gōpika now rises and comes out and asks them what she has to do.

6. *Śaṅgoḍu śakkaramēndum taḍakkaiyan paṅgayakkannānaip
pāda ēlōrempāvāy*

"Come and glorify the lotus-eyed, long-armed One, who is holding the conch and the disc."

He rejoices in holding in his hands the conch and the disc; and this ebullition of joy lengthens his arms and widens his eyes; so they glorify the lotus-eyed and long-armed Kṛṣṇa. Doubts may arise about the propriety of glorifying Kṛṣṇa as the holder of conch and disc. Kṛṣṇa as a gōpāla has neither disc nor conch. But when Kṛṣṇa emerges from the womb of Dēvaki, he is seen with four arms in two of which he holds the disc and conch. But in response to the prayers of Vasudēva and Dēvaki, Kṛṣṇa veils the arms carrying the disc and the conch from the sight of the enemies. But to the gōpikas and Yaśōda who love him, he presents himself with his four arms. So the gōpikas sing about him as the holder of conch and disc. The conch is very dear to them. They wish to have its fortune. The conch never leaves Kṛṣṇa's

arm. It enjoys the touch of his nether lip. It speaks by the impact of his breath. The gōpikas envy the fortune of the conch; and eagerly wish for the touch of his arm, the taste of his nether lip and the impingement of his sweet breath. So they glorify him as the holder of the conch.

Again, the conch is a symbol of praṇava or Ōmkāra. It is the means to proclaim the nature of the Supreme Self even to those who are far away. Kṛṣṇa blows the conch to summon straying cows to join the herd. It is the conch that reclaims those among the individual selves who are worthy to be saved but who have strayed far from God. It is the conch that shatters the hearts of their enemies and keeps them at a distance. The conch thus stands for the Ōmkāra, which is the means to remove what is unwanted and to secure what is desired. When the Supreme is worshipped through praṇava as means, He is sure to be attained. So the gōpikas glorify Kṛṣṇa, the holder of the conch.

The disc is the Sudarṣana that enables devotees to have a clear vision of the nature of the Supreme Self. In tune with the volition of the Supreme, it leaves His hand and moves away any distance and by itself executes His will by killing the enemies. So the gōpikas glorify the Wielder of the disc, so that He may destroy their enemies. Both the conch and the disc, out of their excessive love for Him, pronounce a benediction on Him always in a loud tone, though there is none who can threaten danger to Him. If the supplicants develop hope and fondness for the Lord, it is on account of the conch and the disc. If their enemies are afraid to strike and keep themselves at a distance, it is again on account of the conch and the disc. So the gōpikas glorify Him who holds them. Those two long arms which hold the disc and the conch are their protection. The sages and saints who bear the symbols of the conch and the disc on their shoulders are the meritorious people, who can purify the world and to whom aspirants should turn for succour.

“Let us glorify the lotus-eyed One.” Before the gōpikas, the eyes of Lord Kṛṣṇa appear meek as though to indicate that Kṛṣṇa is a humble servant of theirs. Those very eyes sometimes look clever when they discharge the duties of a messenger. On some occasions, they sparkle with authority. Sometimes those

eyes shoot forth glances that mingle with the looks of gōpikas whom they protect. At times, those eyes charm the gōpikas into submission and make them his slaves. Thus do those eyes give bliss to the gōpikas. Besides, they enthral the Ever-wise residents of the Heavenly Abode and give them all protection. Having lotus eyes is a symbol of lordship over all. Enjoying the bewitching beauty of those eyes is the fruit of attaining Him. It is those very eyes that illumine the gracious considerateness of the Supreme.

The conch helps to bring near those who keep aloof, by eliminating their hostility. The disc helps those who approach God to have a clear vision of His nature and form. Those long and radiant arms help in welcoming aspirants, lifting them up and embracing them. Those charming eyes erase the feeling of exhaustion, provide refreshing happiness and impart new life. The gōpikas therefore sing his names: "Holder of the conch," "Wielder of the disc," "Possessor of long, radiant arms," "Lotus-eyed Lord." They tell their friend: "When you, with your adroitness in speech, sing glorifying His names, love of God surges from you. We pray that you will direct the flow of that love on to us. We are languishing owing to separation from Kṛṣṇa. Our company is like a corn-field with the crop drooping for want of rain. We pray that you rain the showers of your spiritual experience on us and thus refresh and rejuvenate us."

As in the previous Pāśurams, here also an Āḷwār is roused from sleep; and he is Tonḍaraḍippoḍi Āḷwār. He is also known by two other names, Vipranārāyaṇa and 'Bhaktāṅghrيرهuvu, which means a particle of dust off the feet of devotees.' He is a great saint. He has raised about his house a flower-garden, culled flowers every day from it, made beautiful garlands and offered them regularly to Śrī Ranganātha. He has strayed away from this devotional exercise, falling a prey to the fraudulent pretence of devotion by Dēvadēvi. But by God's grace, he becomes free from sensual pleasures and recovers his former devotional enthusiasm. He has composed a hymn in Tamil to awaken Śrīranganātha at dawn. According to Vaiṣṇava traditional practice, this Tamil hymn will be recited, without fail, at the time of worship before Tiruppāvai is recited. This Prabhāta hymn is called 'Tiruppālḷi yōlucchi' in Tamil.

The garden behind the house and the well with steps leading to the waters, the lotuses and the tulips, described in the Pāṣuram refer to the flower-garden of Vipranārāyaṇa. The ascetics who are described in the Pāṣuram signify Vipranārāyaṇa who has made his flower-garden his home and who giving up all sense-pleasures, put on the ochre robes and devoted himself to the glorification and service of Śrī Ranganātha. Vipranārāyaṇa uses the term Yeḷundaruḷāyē to awaken Śrī Ranganātha; and Āṇḍāl uses almost the same expression ' yeḷundirāy ' in awakening saints.



PĀŚURAM XV

PREFACE.

So far nine gōpikas have been awakened; and the tenth is being roused in this Pāśuram. With this the first part, consisting of rousing the saints, will be completed. The second part deals with awakening God. In the first half of Tiruppāvai, Pāśurams I to V detail the preparations for the ritual and the next ten are concerned with awakening ten gōpikas. With this, the gōpikas earn fitness to enter the temple. So far, the ways in which aspirants should conduct themselves before the saints are set forth; and this Pāśuram presents the fruit resulting from that conduct. From the 16th Pāśuram to the 28th, the code of conduct of devotees in relation to God is explained; and the accruing result is detailed in Pāśuram 29. The first-half is one Tiruppāvai, and the second-half another; and the first leads to the second. The first-half deals with seeking the favour of saints. By supplicating the help of acknowledged devotees, the Ājwārs, the spiritual qualities in the aspirants fully emerge and manifest themselves; and the aspirants thus acquire a form that is dear to God. This Pāśuram presents the state in which the spiritual qualities are fully manifest.

Of the ten Pāśurams (VI to XV) devoted to the awakening of saints, the first three (VI, VII & VIII) deal with reverential *hearing* and the fruit thereof; the next four (IX to XII) deal with *meditation* and the following two (XIII & XIV) with *contemplation*. In this Pāśuram is presented how, as a consequence of the effort so far made, spiritual qualities bloom forth. Spiritual qualities like Śama, control of the mind and Dama, control over the sense-organs, and Kṣama, spirit of endurance extending to cheerful acceptance of blame, are all essential. Among them, the last quality, Kṣama, is the highest. Every individual will have some shortcoming or other: “nakaśchinnāparādhyati: there is none who is blameless.” It is very difficult for a man to realise the wrong that he has done and to own it. Even when he owns it, he feels hurt when others talk about it. But the zenith of endurance

is reached when a man cheerfully accepts blame, without even a twinge of pain in the mind, when elders say that what he has done is wrong, even though he is not convinced of the truth of the accusation. When others point out defects in us, whether we have them or not, we have to endure their comments and remain quiet. We should not be provoked to protest; and we should not enter into disputation with them. Unless and until the ego in us perishes completely, we cannot remain unaffected, when shortcomings are attributed to us.

“Rūkṣākṣarāṇi śruṇvan vai tathā Bhāgavatē ritāu
praṇāma pūrvakam kṣāmtiā yōvadēt vaiṣṇavōhi saḥ:

He is the Vaiṣṇava who humbly and cheerfully and reverentially receives, without feeling hurt in the mind, the severe reprimands of the devotees of God. This excellence in endurance is deemed to be the highest of all the qualities of the devotees of Viṣṇu.”

It is said that on one occasion Śrī Bhattar is making his submission before Śrī Ranganātha, recounting all his mean qualities. Among those present is one who is jealous of him. As each bad quality is mentioned by Bhattar, his critic goes on asserting, by saying ‘yes,’ that the former has that defect.

“Amaryadaḥ kṣudraḥ, chalamatiḥ, asūyāprasavabhūḥ,
kritaghnaḥ, durmānī, smaraparavaśaḥ, vanchanaparaḥ,
nruśamsaḥ, pāpiṣṭaḥ ”

After completing his submission, Śrī Bhattar approaches the critic, prostrates before him and declares; “You are my great benefactor. On the basis of your evidence, Śrī Ranganātha will decide that all these vices are truly applicable to me, and will surely save me by eliminating them from me.” Endurance of this kind, which regards as benefactor the critic who testifies to his shortcomings with such audacious assurance, is rare and commendable. The fault is not his; it lies with another; yet he accepts that it is his; such acceptance of blame is, indeed, praiseworthy. Let us take the example of Bharata in the Rāmāyaṇa. It is quite clear that Mandhara, Kaika and Daśaratha are responsible for exiling Śrī Rāma into the woods. But the high-minded Bharata takes the blame on himself.

“ Na Mandharāyāṇ nacha mātu rasyāṇ dōṣo na Rājāyō
 nacha Rāghavasya,
 mat pāpamēvātra nimitta māsīl vana pravēṣe Raghunanda-
 nasya:

For Rāmachandrā's exile into the woods, Mandhara is not responsible; nor my mother, Kaika; nor the king, Daśaratha; nor Śrī Rāma. It is my sin that has driven Rāma into exile.” Such a declaration is a proof of high-souled greatness. One who realises one's own fault and traces one's misfortunes to it is also considered a great person. The case of Sīta comes to mind. While in captivity in Lanka, Sīta tells Hanumān that her own misdeeds, and not Rāvaṇa, Lakṣmaṇa nor Rāma, is responsible for her being carried off to Lanka by Rāvaṇa and for her being neglected so long by Rāma. “ Mamaiva duṣkṛtam kinchit mahadasti na saṁśayaḥ: My own sin, little or great, is doubtless responsible for my misery.” Sīta's idea seems to be that “ the little sin ” that she has committed is towards God; and that “ the great sin ” she has committed is towards God's devotee. When Sīta offers to accompany Rāma into exile into the woods, Rāma dissuades her, telling her how arduous life there will be. Feeling piqued, Sīta taunts him: “ When my father comes to know of this, he may think that a woman, disguised as man, has managed to marry his daughter. He may wonder how a warrior could be so unmanly as to feel diffident to protect his wife in the woods, and leave her behind at home? ” To have allowed such an unjust thought to cross her mind, is to have committed a sin, however venial, towards Śrī Rāma (God-incarnate), whom she knows to be unequalled in prowess. Enraged by Lakṣmaṇa's hesitation to go to the rescue of Rāma at her request, Sīta fiercely denounces him. This is a cruel wrong done to Lakṣmaṇa; and this is her second misdeed. The second, a grave crime against a devotee of God, is the greater of the two lapses. She has realised that, as a result of these lapses only, she has had to suffer the acute grief of separation from Rāma. This state of mind, which assumes full responsibility for its misery, is the most exalted state.

It is common among those who make public speeches to signify their freedom from egotism by declaring that they are men of little learning and less worth. But if some one else speaks

supporting their assessment of themselves, they are sure to get hurt, even enraged. What is to be achieved is freedom from ego in spirit and in truth. It will not do merely to assume freedom for the moment and spell it out as a matter of formal courtesy. Freedom from ego is the touchstone of perfection in spiritual equipment.

This pāsuram (XV) takes the form of a conversation between the gōpika within and those without, the lines being recited alternately by them. Each accuses the other as hard-hearted; but finally the gōpika within takes the blame upon herself, enduring their charge without smarting. This indicates her state of freedom from ego. In the previous Pāsuram, they have awakened the gōpika with singing the glories of the Lotus-eyed One, who holds the disc and the conch in His arms. The gōpika to be awakened today longs to serve the company of singing devotees. Hearing their hymn of praise, she sings the same hymn in sweet strains that are comparable to the notes of a vīṇa (stringed musical instrument). The gōpikas outside hear the strains and, charmed by their sweetness, go in the direction of their origin. Then they awaken the girl and ask her to join them.

So far, the process of self-discipline to be gone through in order to attain God is elaborated. The main thing to be achieved by this discipline is the eradication of the ego. Until this is achieved, it is not possible to secure initiation and incantation from an Āchārya, by which alone spiritual experience can be attained. The gōpika to be awakened today has reached the state of fulness in spiritual equipment.

Elleilaṅgiḷiye innamuṇḍiḷiyō

ṣillenṇaḷaiyēnmin naṅgaimīr pōdaruginṇē

vallaiunkaṭṭuraikaḷ paṇḍeyun vāyaṇidum

vallirkaḷ nīṅgaḷe nāṇedānāyiduga

ollaini pōdāy unakkenna vēṇḍaimai

ellārum pōndārō pōndār pōṇḍēṇṇikkol

vallānai koṇṇānai māttārai māttaḷikka

vallānai māyanaippāḍelō rempāvāy

In this pāṣuram the disputation between the gōpikas from outside and the gōpika from within is recorded as follows:

Summary.

- Gōpikas from without: O girl who has the sweet tone of a tender parrot! How is it you are still asleep?
- Gōpika from within: O perfect gōpikas! Summon me not with your shrill voices causing annoyance. I am coming presently.
- Gōpikas from without: You are a clever girl. We already know the harshness and the adroitness in your words.
- Gōpika from within: You alone are clever and harsh. Why this argument? All right, I alone am harsh.
- Gōpikas from without: What is special about you? Why do you keep yourself alone? Please come out quickly.
- Gōpika from within: Are all the gōpikas here?
- Gōpikas from without: Yes. You may count them.
- Gōpika from within: Good! What is it that I should do?
- Gōpikas from without: Come out and sing the glory of Kṛṣṇa who has killed the mighty elephant Kuvalayāpīḍam, and who has routed the arrogance of enemies and who wields mysterious power.

Commentary.

1. *Ellēiṅṅīliyē inna muṛaṅgudiyo*:—

“O tender parrot ! Are you still asleep? How strange!” All the gōpikas are engaged in glorifying the names of God. Hearing their song, the gōpika within begins singing in tune with the others. Those who sing to the accompaniment of Vīna first strike the ragā

(tune) on the strings; and when harmony is established, they sing, merging their voices in it. Likewise, the gōpika within sings in tune with her companions without. The callers address her as 'parrot,' because of the close similarity that she shows in sweetness of tone and speech with them. The comparison with the parrot holds good in deliciousness and uprightness in speech, but not in austerity of penance. Or, it may be that her youth is similar to the eternal youth of Bhūdēvi and Śrīdēvi who are at times compared to parrots.

Again, the parrot signifies an āchārya, who has attained the same form as the Supreme. The form of God (like the parrot's) is memorable. The form of an āchārya is memorable to his disciples. The parrot has a bright multi-coloured body and a red beak. In a similar way, the āchārya's body appears lustrous by constant union with God; and his face red, manifesting his love of God. By calling her a 'tender parrot,' the gōpikas intend to convey her skill in speech, her uprightness and her tender age. The parrot blurts out, without fraud and secrecy, what it has learned. Whatever it utters, it does in a way that delights the heart. The āchāryas also impart to their disciples clearly and agreeably whatever they know, without keeping back anything, and without imposing upon them. Childhood is indicated by the qualifying word, 'tender' applied to the parrot. Childlikeness is an essential quality for a sage: "Pāṇḍityam nirvidya bālyēna-tiṣṭhāt: The sage should have ripe scholarship and the state of childhood." Scholarship is signified by 'the sweet words of a parrot,' and 'childhood' by the words, 'tender parrot.'

The girl here is a young parrot. She lies on the bed, enjoying union with Kṛṣṇa; and losing herself in joy, she sings of her experience. Hearing her song, the gōpikas outside wish to convey that they know what sweet experience she is having, and that it is improper that she should enjoy it alone. So they address her as 'tender parrot' and tell her: "It is union with Kṛṣṇa that has brought lustre to your body and redness to your face and sweetness to your voice and words. Have you, in your ecstasy that your youth has received fulfilment, lost yourself in sleep? Or do you keep silent lest we should, if you open your mouth and speak, come to learn of your experience and feel hurt or upset? The fruit of your having spiritual experience is to share it with us

and not to go to sleep. You might have lost yourself in the ecstasy of your experience, before we reached your place. But should you remain in that condition after we have come here? Should you not bend your benevolent looks on us and mitigate our acute misery, caused by our separation from Kṛṣṇa? How could you sleep while we, your companions, are in a sad plight? How is it that even after achieving your objective of union with Kṛṣṇa, you do not feel it improper to enjoy it by yourself alone." The underlying idea is that the disciples are charmed with the sweetness of the discourses of Āchāryas and go to them; unable to separate from them, they cling to them and win their goodwill by repeated prayers and obtain from them spiritual experiences.

The gōpika within feels annoyed by their disturbing call to her, as it spoils her spiritual experience. She feels hurt by their praise of her musical talent, and by their taunt about her drowsy sleep. Much upset, she replies thus:—

2. *Śillēṇṇu aḷai yēnmin naṅgaimīr pōdaru giṇṇēn:* "Don't summon me in shrill voices, you perfect girls! I am coming presently."

The melodious tones of the gōpikas appear to be raucous and painful to the girl enjoying the happiness of union with Kṛṣṇa. When we are deeply engrossed in listening to an exposition of a spiritual subject, we feel annoyed even if God should arrive there and disturb us. Similarly, the melody of the song of the gōpikas which she would normally have loved to hear, grates upon her ear in her present state of God-union. In Vaiṣṇava tradition listening to the words of God's devotees is preferable to having spiritual experience. When such is the case, there must be some reason for her speaking in that rough manner to the gōpikas who cannot live without her company and guidance. They think that she is in a state of full, ripe spiritual experience. In the normal course, she will have gone to the houses of the other gōpikas, eager to see them and hear their words; but now, when they come to her house and invite her, she feels annoyed. The gōpikas presume that there must be some strong reason for this strange behaviour.

The truth is that the gōpika within has not lost herself in spiritual experience. Hearing the hymn of praise sung by the gōpikas in their agony of separation from the beloved Kṛṣṇa, she identifies herself with them and joins her voice to theirs in singing his glory. Hearing her voice, the gōpikas without think that she is singing out of the depths of her spiritual experience. So they address her as 'tender parrot.' But she gets angry with them for calling her by a name which she does not deserve. And when she keeps quiet in order that she may continue to listen to their sweet voices and drink in their melody, they enquire why she is sleeping still. Feeling hurt that they are attributing to her thoughts which she has never entertained, she tells them: "Don't summon me in shrill voices, you perfect girls! I am coming." Their praise of her and their enquiry whether she is sleeping, while she is not, grate on her ear and hurt her mind.

She answers in pique thus: "You are, indeed, the perfect girls. How can I have the fulness which you have? Those only are perfect who, on hearing the voices of devotees, enjoy bliss and bestow praise on them. I am not fortunate to have such opportunity. You are all gathered together; and you are enjoying together one another's experiences; and that makes for fulness. Since you have that ripeness, you could call me 'the tender parrot.' Those who are really suffering from the misery of separation from Kṛṣṇa will have fainted on hearing his name; and felt annoyed with, and not praised, those who uttered it. You should have, like me, forgotten yourselves if you are yearning for him. But you hear my singing of his praises, feel happy and compliment me on my song. This is a proof of your fulness. So please do not trouble me further. I shall be with you in a moment."

3. *Vallai un kaṭṭuraika! paṇḍē yuvāy aṇidum:—*

"You are an expert manipulator of words." "We are familiar with your tongue and its bitter words and sarcasms. You are clever and skilful in your words. You stretch yourself happily on bed and sing; and when we hear your sweet voice and summon you, you turn round and blame 'us. Yourself in the wrong, you cleverly put us in the wrong. How astute! Enjoying bliss in the ripeness of your experience, you call us 'the perfect ones.' Does it now show your harshness? You address us, who are your close

associates, with all the respect that is usually shown to strangers and elders. How strange is this! We are familiar with your tongue. You have the skill to turn the tables at will, making the wrong side appear the better and the right side appear the worse. Let it be so. What can avail us? We do not know how long we have to endure the misery of standing here."

Hearing these words, the gōpika within feels upset and says in touching words:—

4. *Vallirkaḷ nīṅaḷē*

"You are the astute girls, not I."

"Don't I know your words? You speak in this strain because today you happen to come to my house. Don't I know how dexterously you will have spoken, if I happen to stand at your door? Hearing you, I have forgotten myself and am humming a tune. And you misunderstand me and speak harshly to me. You are the tough ones, not I."

The argument has proceeded in this peculiar way till now. The gōpika within is unable to endure, when her companions charge her with a fault that she has not committed; and so enters into disputation with them; and to prove her innocence she exposes their harshness. This is not the proper state of mind for spiritual aspirants. Whether deserving or not of merit and praise, whether guilty or not of shortcomings and blame, a spiritual aspirant should, unquestioningly and gracefully, accept either, when such comments are made by God's devotees. The gōpika here is unable to stand their praise of her as 'tender parrot'; she is impatient of enduring the blame when they reprove her for 'sleeping still.' She enters into argument with them to make them know her real situation. This is what a devotee ought not to do. It is not deemed a great achievement, if a devotee succeeds in concentrating his mind on God in a state of contemplation. Real achievement is seen only when he comes out of it and when he is with other devotees or other worldly persons; then he should remain unaffected by their praise or blame. In this equanimity does his real achievement lie. He should treat praise and blame as the same and react to neither. (Tulya nindā stutiḥ mount). The gōpika here has shown her

reaction to both; but being well-versed in the qualities that a true Vaiṣṇavite should have, she immediately realises her fault and says:

5. *nānēdāṇāyiduga*

“I am the harsh girl. Granted.”

Thus she accepts blame for the fault attributed to her. Among the qualities of Śrīvaiṣṇavites, humility where each regards himself as inferior to every other is considered to be the best. One should not be egoistic, deeming oneself superior to others. Bharata has proved in his conduct how this quality is the best. An aspirant should not make efforts to impress elders with his virtues or with his lack of vices. He must do his duty. Recognition or no recognition—both are immaterial. No effort should be made somehow to attract attention and insinuate oneself into favour. The gōpika within has reached this state primarily as a result of close association with devotees. Long association with the devotees who have visioned God after going through the discipline of reverential hearing, meditation and contemplation, will make the mind to develop a tendency to purity. That this girl represents the farthest limit to that sāt̥tvic tendency is indicated by her words “Nānēdā ṇāyuduga: I am the harsh girl.” With this she has earned fitness to seek goodwill and further aid from an āchārya. This humility, this preparedness to digest blame, is a stepping-stone to seeking spiritual guidance from a preceptor.

Iṣvarasya cha souhārdam yadrucchā sukṛtam tathā
Viṣṇoḥ kaṭākṣaśchā dweṣa ābhimukhyam cha sāt̥tvikaiḥ
sambhāṣaṇam ṣaḍdētāni tvāchārya prāpti hētavaḥ.

1. Friendliness of the Supreme Self. 2. Incidental or casual good deed of the individual self. 3. Graciousness of Lord Viṣṇu. 4. Absence of ill-feeling 5. Spiritual orientation 6. Conversation with the pure-minded—these six are the factors that urge an aspirant to seek the spiritual guidance of an āchārya. The Lord is all kindness. He cannot bear to see the agony of the individual selves who are bound by their works (Karma). But even He does not go against the doctrine that they will have to be saved, only by the good works they have done. Hence He eagerly waits to see if they will do any meritorious deeds, so

that He might go to their rescue. On account of ignorance, the individual self shows no interest in good works and turns away from God. But even during such times, he does some good by word and deed, though he is unaware of it; and this good is of three kinds:—

1. Casual good 2. Incidental good 3. Good ensuing in the course of conversation.

1. Running after a calf round a temple in an effort to catch hold of it is a casual good. Going round a temple is a 'good' deed; though it is done here without any intention to do so, the purpose being catching the calf. Such actions as these, where good is done without meaning it, come under this category of Casual good. (Yādṛchika sukṛtam).

2. It is possible sometimes that while one does something for one's own good, one is able to serve the interests of another also. This is 'incidental good.' While keeping watch over his wealth from being stolen by thieves, a person may be incidentally saving another man's wealth also from theft. This is an example of incidental good. (ānuṣāṅgika sukṛtam).

3. While speaking about his own business-propositions and deals, a person may be uttering the names of sacred places and of divinities. The merit that results from mention of such sacred names during conversation comes under Prāsāṅgika sukṛtam. The Lord-of-all reckons the merit that comes from these three types of good, though unwittingly earned by the individual self and shows consideration for it. When the individual self takes a new birth, the gracious looks of the Lord bend towards him and enable him to develop taste in devotion to Viṣṇu. And then the hatred of God that he has so long harboured melts away. He is now oriented towards God; and this leads him into the company of pure devotees and conversation with them. Then he will seek initiation from an āchārya. Such seems to be the process of spiritual awakening and aspiration. After securing the blessings of the ten saints whom they have awakened in Pāsurams VI to XV, the gōpikas reach the community of āchāryas in the next pāsuram.

After the sattvagūṇa (the tendency to purity) intensifies, the ego subsides and a state is reached when the reproofs and ill-feelings of others could be accepted with perfect calm. This is the state described in this pāṣuram. The gōpika within has coolly owned the fault of harshness attributed to her. To test how long this admission lasts the gōpikas press her to hasten out.

6. *Ollai nī pōdāy unakkenna vēruṇaimai*

“Get up quickly and join us. Why persist in this loneliness?” When all are having a common mess, it is improper to cook for oneself separately. Similarly, when all of them are to enjoy the experience together in company, it is unbecoming of her to enjoy it by herself. Spiritual experience from which other devotees are excluded is to be rejected, in the same way as worship of any deity other than the one after your heart is to be avoided. The gōpikas urge her to hasten out; “If you do not come out at once, our lives are in jeopardy and you come in for evil. You should not keep your spiritual experience to yourself.” Let us take an example from the Rāmāyaṇa. Bharata goes to the forest with the intention of requesting Rāma to get back to Ayōdhya. Lakṣmaṇa misunderstands Bharata’s motive and gets ready to kill him. Seeing Lakṣmaṇa’s hasty preparation to strike, Rāma observes: “Lakṣmaṇa! Why kill Bharata? If you want the kingdom, I shall tell Bharata about it; and, for certain, he will give it to you.” Hearing these words, Lakṣmaṇa collapses with shame. This shows that God does not wish that His devotee should enjoy Him by himself alone, without the participation of other devotees. He does not approve of such selfish isolation. On hearing her companions speak thus, the gōpika within answers: “Happiness without your participation is no happiness for me. Believing that some of you are up and others still asleep, I am delaying coming out so that all may join meanwhile. Nothing else is keeping me back.”

7. *Ellārum pōndārō.*

Have all our friends come?

Are all of them present here?

8. *pōndār pōndeṇṇikko!*

“All have woken up and are assembled here. You may come out and count each of them.”

“All the gōpikas, who languish for Kṛṣṇa are assembled here at your door without exception and without any distinction; and they are waiting to rest their eyes on you. We have not uttered a falsehood just to awaken you and bring you into our midst. We are telling the truth. Please come out. You may touch each one of us and count the number to satisfy yourself.” By this declaration, they clarify that seeing and touching great saints with reverence are instrumental to the salvation of individual selves.

“Na hyam ma yāni tīrthāni na dēvā mṛcchilāmayāḥ,
tē punamtyuru kālēna darśanādēva sādhanāḥ:

The waters of the Ganges and other rivers are not the only sacred waters. The deities made of clay and stone are not the only deities. It is only after a lapse of time that these waters and these deities can take away sins. The process of purification takes time. But the virtuous alone, by their very presence, can purify people.” In the opinion of the gōpikas, her mere appearance before them can eliminate the sins that stand as obstacles to their union with Kṛṣṇa. She must come out and appear before them. She must look at each of them individually and accost them by name and enquire how each one is, and then touch one by one and make the count—these actions of hers, in their view, give them greater happiness than God-experience itself. If she comes out and begins counting them, one by one, as demanded by them, it takes a very long time, as the gōpikas gathered there are innumerable. In the result, they hope to have the pleasure of her contact for an indefinite time without break. They then tell her what she has to do after appearing before them.

9. *Vallānai koṇṇānai mātтарai māttaḷikka vallānai māyanaippāḍa
ēlōrempāvāy*

“Rise and come out to sing the glories of the Great One who has killed the mighty elephant, Kuvalayaḍṇam, and who

has suppressed the arrogant prowess of enemies, and who has worked miracles and wielded mysterious powers.”

The gōpikas wish to hear her sing of the great victories of Kṛṣṇa. Of them special mention is made of killing the elephant Kuvalayāpīḍam, routing the wrestlers, Chanūra and Muṣṭika, and putting an end to Kamsa. Kamsa invites Kṛṣṇa to the sacrificial rites he intends to perform. This he does with the vicious object of getting him killed by his mighty elephant Kuvalayāpīḍam. But Kṛṣṇa catches hold of its tusks, pulls them out and kills it. When Śrīkṛṣṇa is engaged in fight with the elephant and with the wrestlers and with Kamsa, the young women of Mathura are in the grip of fear, apprehending danger to Kṛṣṇa. It is only to free them from fear that Kṛṣṇa kills the elephant. The gōpikas mention this heroic exploit foremost, because his purpose in doing this is to redeem the women of Mathura, who are like themselves, of anxiety in their minds. Kṛṣṇa has killed the elephant and saved himself; in so doing he has also saved them for he is their life; and then he has given himself to them. The women of Mathura surrender themselves to Kṛṣṇa when they see him triumph over the elephant. In the past, he has saved an elephant (from a crocodile); now he has punished an elephant. Of these two, punishing this elephant has brought greater good to the world. ‘Kuvalayāpīḍam’ means ‘that which does evil to the world.’ And this is the ego (Ahamkāra). The ego which identifies the body with the self is the cause of bondage. God alone must destroy it. Unless it is destroyed, the Supreme Self does not become visible. The ego attempts to destroy the Supreme. So at the very outset, it is destroyed by God; and the self is made to turn towards God. This very ego will not be punished but saved, if it surrenders to God and says: “I am thine : tavāsmi.” This is what has happened when Gajendra is saved.

Again, the gōpikas mention this episode for another reason. In the same way as he has killed Kuvalayāpīḍam, Kṛṣṇa will steal away their pride in their high sensitiveness about their womanhood. Tradition lays down that women are dependants; and so they should not by themselves venture forth to meet their Lord. The Lord must Himself go to save them. But when love gets the better of their reason, the idea that they are women and so should

not go out of the home, perishes. The destruction of Kuvalayāpiḍam signifies the strength of Śrīkṛṣṇa in destroying the gōpikas' sensitive attachment to womanhood and in making it impossible for them to stay in their homes without going in search of Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīkṛṣṇa has, in addition to killing Kuvalayāpiḍam, uprooted and destroyed the wrestlers, Chāṇūra and Muṣṭika and Kamsa himself. He has attacked and destroyed all their enemies to the last; he is not the one to leave this work half-done. On the other hand, Śrī Rāma brings himself into trouble again and again by not eradicating his enemies at once. He kills Subāhu but leaves Mārīcha alive. He disfigures Sūrpaṇakha by cutting off her nose and ears and dismisses her without putting an end to her. When Rāvaṇa is left helpless on the battle-field with his chariot smashed and charioteer dead and the bow put out of action, Rāma permits him to leave unmolested and invites him to battle the next day. By showing consideration repeatedly to avowed enemies, Rāma is obliged to face several dangers. But Kṛṣṇa does not take half-measures in dealing with enemies. He believes in their total extermination. The gōpikas declare: "Kṛṣṇa himself comes to us after destroying the enemies, surrenders to us and takes delight in placing himself at our disposal. He undergoes in our hands all the troubles that his enemies undergo in his hands. Allowing himself to be controlled by us, he finally takes us under his control. In the same way as he has destroyed the wrestlers, he has smashed the intransigence of our elders, which has been an obstacle to our meeting him, and has made us his thralls. Let us sing about his glorious victories ceaselessly till the tongue becomes dry. Chāṇūra and Muṣṭika are Kāma (Desire) and Krōdha (anger). These characteristics are nourished by the tendency of passion (rajōguṇa) and they are obstacles to attaining God. God alone will destroy them and enable us to attain Him. It is impossible for us to get rid of the ego, desire and anger, by our own effort or by a process of expiation. When we sing His glories ceaselessly, the Supreme, who is ever alert in protecting His supplicants, Himself eradicates them."

The gōpikas thus implore the girl within to help them to give up their sensitive attachment to womanhood and to attain Him; and this becomes possible by ceaseless glorification of His names;

and therefore they request her to sing His name and rejuvenate them.

The gōpikas have begun singing about God's attributes in Pāṣuram V (vāyīnāl pāḍi) and described in it the process of the manifestation of the incarnation of Kṛṣṇa. In this pāṣuram, the achievement of the main purpose of that incarnation, destruction of Kamsa, is dealt with. In between, in three pāṣurams (Kēśava-naippāḍa, pādippaṟaikōṇḍu, kīrtimaipāḍā) they have glorified the way in which Kṛṣṇa eliminates the enemies. Then they sing about the bewitching beauty of Kṛṣṇa's auspicious and divine form (muḡilvaṇṇan pēr pāḍa) and later of his divine weapons and of the radiant beauty of his eyes and arms (seṅgoḍu śakkara mēndum). In this pāṣuram they glorify the manner in which, without the aid of weapons, he has killed with his hands Kuvalayāpḍam, Chāṇūra and Muṣṭika and Kamsa, and won the hearts of the gōpikas and in turn lost his heart to them.

In singing thus about Kṛṣṇa's story, the ways in which Gou aids the adorer in his attempts to attain Him are enunciated. The city of Mathura is the mind itself. Kamsa presents the rājasaguṇapravṛtti, the arrogant reign of passion. When passion exercises power, Sattwaguṇa, the tendency to purity, and its offshoot Daivīsampada, divine affluence (represented here by Dēvakī and Vasudēva) are thrown into prison. But when the time comes for the tendency to purity to blossom forth, sattwaguṇa brings about the manifestation of God in the prison itself. Kṛṣṇa who is born of the activity of purity hides himself, as though he is afraid of the reign of arrogant passion. And he hides in the house of Nandu and Yaśōda. Nanda is the āchārya (preceptor) and Yaśōda is the mantra (incantation). Kṛṣṇa is brought up by these two, preceptor and incantation. So in order to do favour to the adorer Kṛṣṇa himself destroys all the enemies who plan to do away with him. The first among them is Pūtana; and she is Avidya (Ignorance). The second is Śakaṭāsura; and he is Karma (works). The third is Kēśi, the demon who enters into and fully possesses the horse; and he is the tempter who misleads by identifying body with self. The fourth is Bakāsura; and he is Dambha (pretentiousness). The fifth is Kuvalayāpḍa and he is Ahamkāra (ego). Next come the wrestlers, Chāṇūra and Muṣṭika; and these are Kāma and Krodha

(Desire and Anger). Kṛṣṇa destroys them all and uproots their source Kamsa, who is Rajōprabhāva (Dominating arrogance); and then finally he surrenders himself to the adorer.

Some points of interest in this pāsuram are recounted below.

1. *Ellē Ilaṅḡiḷiyē*

‘O tender parrot.’ From this address, we learn that the words to be uttered by those who have a taste for spiritual matters should be sweet, pleasant and clear.

2. *Inna muraṅgudiyō*

“Are you still sleeping?” From this, we gather that when association with devotees is available, it is wrong to keep away from it, and to be preoccupied with other interests.

3. *sillenṛaḷai yēnmin:—*

“Summon me not with your shrill voices.”

These words signify that, however harsh the admonition be, those who have a taste for spiritual matters should endure and make no grievance of it.

4. *Naṅgaimīr pōdarugiṇēn*

“O perfect girls, I am coming.”

From these words, we gather that even when the mind is hurt by the words of any one, the spiritual aspirant should not indulge in a harsh retort; but reply in a courteous tone that suggests reverence.

5. *Nānēdā ṇāyuḍuga:*

“Maybe, I am the harsh girl.”

It is clear from this that the aspirant should be able to disregard the faults of others and accept blame as his own.

6. *Ollaiṇi pōdāy:*

“Come out quickly ”

From these words we learn that association with the devotees is the only sustenance that keeps up the life of the spiritual aspirant. Without it, he cannot live.

7. *Unakkenna vēṇḍaimai:—*

Why this isolation for you?”

This shows that an aspirant should tread along the beaten track of the ancients and not behave in a different way.

8. *Ellārum pōṇḍārō:*

“Have all come?”

All who have taste in spiritual matters are to be honoured alike without distinction of age or learning.

9. *Pōṇḍēṇi kkoḷ:*

“Come and count them.”

These words make clear that though there are many who have had spiritual experience, the true Vaiṣṇava feels that it is his fault if there should be even one without it. This feeling for others less fortunate in spiritual matters is considered a noble quality in a Vaiṣṇavite.

10. *Vallānai koṇṇānai pāḍa:*

Come out to sing of the great one who has killed the mighty elephant, who has routed the enemies and who has wielded miraculous power.

After acquiring all the ~~spiritual~~ ~~qualities~~, one becomes qualified for spiritual experience. ~~The aspirant~~ goes on glorifying God's attributes and names, ~~praising~~ ~~praise~~ as his sustenance, nourishment and enjoyment. Glorifying God in this spirit is the

means of enlivening and rejuvenating God's devotees. The gōpikas have thus awakened ten others, and acquiring from them their special qualities proceed with them to the mansion of Nandagōpa to awaken Kṛṣṇa.

As in the previous pāsurams, in this also an Ālwār is awakened. His name is Tiruppānālwār.

He is born an outcaste (in the Panchama Community). From birth his mind is engrossed on Śrī Ranganātha. He is in the habit of singing about Ranganātha to the accompaniment of Vīna, on the banks of Kāvēri; and he is often transported by the singing of Lord's praises into a state of unconsciousness. The Brāhmins who adhered to the rules of Varṇa (caste) consider the saint as impure and untouchable, as he is born an outcaste. They order him to keep aloof. One day the Ālwār who is absorbed in singing the Lord's praises is not in a state to hear the words of reproof. The Brāhmins abuse and stone him. Śrī Ranganātha feels pained at the outrage committed on His devotee. He summons Śrīlōkasāranga Mahāmuni, a saint belonging to the highest caste, and orders him to carry Tiruppānālwār on his shoulders and fetch him to His presence. The Mahāmuni carries out the bidding. Then the Ālwār worships Śrī Ranganātha and with a heart filled with devotion sings a hymn in Tamil, amalanāpidirān, on him. This Ālwār, ignoring the abuses showered on him by others, loses himself in God-consciousness. He even regards that the entire blame rests on him for the treatment meted out to him. He is not depressed by abuse, nor is he elated by praise. This condition of complete freedom from ego is what is shown in the gōpika of this pāsuram. In the same way as an adorer worships the ten ālwārs before reaching the main shrine, the gōpikas awaken ten saints before they reach the mansion of Nandagōpa.

PĀŚURAM XVI

PREFACE.

Having roused the ten gōpikas, the party arrives at the mansion of Nandagōpa. In fact, it is not merely ten that Āṇḍāl-gōpika has roused but all those who are worthy of union with Kṛṣṇa. The gōpikas then seek the permission of the Guard of the mansion and the Keeper of the gate to enter the house. The mode of worship of the incarnation in an idol is combined with the incidents in the incarnation of Kṛṣṇa and a method of attaining salvation by worshipping the Immanent Lord through contemplation is suggested in Tiruppāvai. In the second Pāśuram, the gōpikas have taken a pledge that they will not do anything that has not been practised by elders (ṣeyyādana ṣeyyōm). They know that their elders have always approached God for favours only through the mediation of great sages. Here they seek to reach Lord Kṛṣṇa by securing the goodwill of the Guard of the mansion and of the Watch at the entrance and the blessings of Nandagōpa.

When an adorer enters a temple, he offers his salutations to the guard of the sacred place (Kṣhētrapālaka) and then to the watch at the entrance (Dwārapālaka); and later he adores the Divine Mother (amma) and then approaches the main Deity for worship. Those who adore the Immanent Lord bring under control the senses, the vital airs, and the mind; and then through the exercise of intellect they acquire knowledge of the self, and they adore the Immanent One with self-knowledge. In her pāśurams, elaborating the ritual, Āṇḍāl brings together the methods adopted (1) by the gōpikas in reaching Kṛṣṇa, (2) by the adorers in reaching the main Deity in a temple, and (3) by the sages in reaching the Immanent Being within themselves.

A doubt may arise as to how the simple and uneducated gōpikas are aware of the traditional practice, known to highly educated sages, of awakening intermediaries in worship. There is no room for this doubt, because those who eagerly aspire to

attain God will, under His grace, acquire skill in the traditional practices observed by the adepts in Knowledge. Whatever they do will be in tune with the injunctions of the Scriptures of which they may be ignorant. Scriptures set forth and embody long-standing, approved practices. The gōpikas have not regulated their conduct by scriptures. Their unexcelled love and attachment to Kṛṣṇa evokes his graciousness towards them and takes them along the approved path.

It takes a long time to attain God for those who are born in a community that can study scriptures and earn knowledge. They have to make a thorough study of the scriptures, grasp the essentials, determine what part of knowledge secures freedom from bondage of birth, and in consonance with it carry on works to reach the goal; treading along this path necessarily takes time. To those who cling to the faith that they should attain God and that they cannot live without Him and that He alone is the means to take them to their goal, God's grace becomes an instrument in making them adopt the practices of the learned sages. So they need not have knowledge of the scriptures. A man who wants to make gold has to acquire knowledge of alchemy by hard study and apply it in his experiments of making gold. But to a man who has the philosopher's stone (Paraśuvēdi) all this bother is unnecessary. Whatever he touches turns into gold. Whatever the man, who clings to God with his unexcelled love, speaks becomes scripture; whatever he does, becomes Vēdic practice. The gōpikas belong to this category. Because of their intense love for Kṛṣṇa, their actions automatically conform to the injunctions of scriptures under the direction of his grace. One should not seek refuge in God direct; one should invoke the blessings of an āchārya before approaching God. If a person ignores the preceptor and makes a direct approach to God, he will have to face the fate that has overtaken Sūrpaṇakha who, ignoring Lakṣmaṇa, has gone straight to Rāma with her offer of love. While seeking the favour of an āchārya, it is essential to approach him through his close disciples. Only those who have reached a state of mind, which is free from ego, are fit to approach an āchārya. In order to reach that state of mind, it is essential to have close association with saintly men. The gōpikas have sought the favour of association with ten saints and have become free from ego. Now they are

in a fit condition to approach the āchārya, Nandagōpa. And before they meet him, they attempt to earn the goodwill of the guard of the mansion and the keeper of the gate.

Those who worship God should first get control over the senses. In awakening the ten gōpikas it is shown how the ten sense-organs, conative and cognitive, are brought under control. After that, by exercises of breath-control the vital airs (Prāṇas) should be brought under control. Control of vital airs is suggested in the gōpikas' seeking the favour of the guard of the mansion. Thereafter, the mind has to be brought under control; and this is indicated by the gōpikas' securing the goodwill of the keeper of the gate. It is only then that an approach should be made to the āchārya for his blessings. When we go to a temple we worship the kṣētrapālaka, the guard of the sacred place, and the watch at the entrance, Dwārapālaka, before we enter the shrine. This secret also is implied here.

It is an accepted and long-standing custom that we should make an approach to God only through mediators. Sri Yāmunāchārya while composing Stōtraratna (Gems of glorification) thought it proper that praise of āchārya should precede the glorification of the Lord and also succeed it. Vālmiki begins his Rāmāyaṇa with supplication to the Āchārya. Thus the mediation of an āchārya is essential. "Mumukṣurvai śaraṇa maham prapadyē: One who seeks liberation should accept Śrīmannārāyaṇa alone as the means to it." Yet for such acceptance, too, an āchārya is needed. "Āchāryavān Puruṣōvēda, Āchāryāddhaiva vidaditā vidyā sādhiṣṭam prāpat." The Sruti declares: "One who has an āchārya alone can attain God. Knowledge received from an āchārya only can accomplish the end." Like those who are well-versed in scriptures, the gōpikas also seek the favour of āchāryas. Nandagōpa is their āchārya. He mansion holds the community of preceptors. They reach that mansion today.

It is the individual self that aspires for God, believing in Him as both the means and the end; and it is God who is to fulfil his aspiration. Why then an āchārya in between them? This doubt may arise. The Lord-of-all gives us the bodies we deserve according to the output of our works; He gives us the scriptures which prescribe the right way of conduct; and He considers it His duty to punish

those who do not conform to it. Taking into account the misdeeds of the individual self, the Lord may reject him, even if he entertains the faith that He is the means of reaching Him. If there is an Āchārya, who has earned His acceptance, close by, he can by his intercession make Him forget the lapses of the individual self. Thus an āchārya is essential to cover our shortcomings and lapses and secure for us the Lord's graciousness. Again, it is very difficult to develop a strong conviction that God is the only means. Till such firmness is reached, it is necessary that the aspirant should approach God through the mediation of an āchārya who has accomplished that abidance in his conviction. The meritorious Puṇḍarīka and the sinful Kṣatrabandhu have both attained liberation, only through the good offices of Āchāryas. From the Rāmāyaṇa we gather that Śabari, who is the lowest by birth, poorest in knowledge and coarsest in behaviour, has gone to the higher regions by virtue of her winning the favour of the Āchārya. Vibhīṣaṇa seeks refuge in Śrī Rāma, only through Sugrīva and others. Thus it is, that following the long-standing practice, the gōpikas approach Nandagōpa through the goodwill of the Guard of the mansion and the Watch at the entrance.

*Nāyaga nāy ninṛa nandagōpa nuḍaiya
 kōyil kāppāṇē! koḍittōṇṛum tōraṇa
 vāṣal kāppāṇē! maṇikkadavam tāḷ tiravāy
 āyarṣirumiyarōmukku; aṛaiparai
 māyan maṇivanṇan nennalē vāy nērndān
 tūyōmāy vandōm, tuyileḷappāḍuvān
 vāyāl munna munnam mātīlādē ammāl ni
 neṣanilai kkadavam nikkēlōrempāvāy*

Summary.

O Guard protecting the mansion of Nandagōpa, the Commander of all! Let us in. O Keeper of the gate, which shines bright with its wreathed decorative arches and flag aloft! Lift the latch of the doors studded with gems. Lord Kṛṣṇa of

sapphire-hue and of mysterious power gave us word yesterday that he would give the musical instrument of "paṇai" We, the gopikas, have not come here seeking any other benefit. We have come here with pure minds. We have come to awaken Kṛṣṇa with our song. Good Sirs! Don't say 'nay' to us. We pray that you yourselves will open the doors which, drawn by mutual love, stand close and tight. Open them and let us in.

Commentary.

1. *Nāyaganāy ninṇa nandagōpan uḍaiya kōyil kāppānē:*

"O guard of the mansion of our leader, Nandagōpa." Nandagōpa is the Commander of the gōpālas including Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa, who is the Lord of the worlds, himself reckons Nandagōpa as his Commander. Nandagōpa has the ability to command even Kṛṣṇa. Lord Kṛṣṇa lacks dependent status in the Heavenly Abode. So by becoming the child of Nanda and Yaśōda, he has become a dependent on them. He is eager to be known by this relationship as "the son of Nanda." "This dependent status, which he has failed to find in the Heavenly Abode, he gets in Vrēpalle. The gōpikas know that Kṛṣṇa is fond of his relationship to Nanda. So when they address the Guard of the mansion, they do not say Guard of Kṛṣṇa's mansion; they say 'Guard of Nanda's mansion.'

Daśaratha has desired to make Rāma the heir-apparent and draw delight from seeing Rāma managing all the affairs of the State under him. But he is not destined to have that pleasure. Vasudeva, too, is denied that good fortune. Only Nandagōpa is lucky in this respect; the people of Nandavraja refer to or address Kṛṣṇa as "Nandagōpa's Yuvarāja," Nanda's heir-apparent.

Strictly speaking, the Supreme has no independence even in the Heavenly Abode. Ananta, Garuḍa, Viṣvakṣēna and other closely devoted servitors, exercise control over Him and direct his movements according to their own wishes. Ananta lulls Him in his lap; Garuḍa whistles Him a way on his back. Viṣvakṣēna waves his cane and issues commands threatening Him to do things in a particular way; and the Supreme meekly submits to him. In His incarnation as Rāma, He is ever honouring elders and ascetics and regulating His conduct according to their wishes

and directions. In His incarnation as Kṛṣṇa He is always a dependant. In his childhood, Kṛṣṇa conducts himself as a dependant of Nanda and Yaśōda. As a grown-up adult, he leaves the reins of government in Satyabhāma's hands and spends his time in embassies and in charioteering. Thus the Supreme shows Himself ever as a dependant; and is disinclined to claim independence. The gōpikas know that Kṛṣṇa feels hurt that he has lost his privilege of dependence if they call that mansion as 'Kṛṣṇa's mansion'; and so they call it 'the mansion of Nandagōpa.' While returning home after Rāvaṇa's defeat and death, Śrī Rāma points Ayōdhya to Sītā from the aeroplane (Puṣpaka vimāna) and observes: "Rājadhānī Piturmama: This is my father's capital." Though his father has been dead for years Rāma recalls the connection of the city with Daśaratha, even because he loves dependence on others. He does not keep to the fore his present relationship with the city and declare his independence by calling Ayōdhya 'Our Capital.' The gōpikas know that Kṛṣṇa will be highly pleased if they call his house 'Nandagōpa's mansion.' Nanda is the āchārya; the Supreme Self will be a dependent on the āchārya. Nanda is the commander; he leads the followers to the destination.

*"Andhōnandhagrahaṇavaśagaḥ yāti Rangēṣa yadvat
Pangurnaukā kuharanihitō niyatē nāvikēna:*

A blind man is led by one who can see; and a lame man is carried to the opposite shore in a ship by the sailor; in the same way the individual self is conducted to the Supreme Self by an āchārya." The āchārya thus becomes a leader who guides his disciples to the Heavenly Abode. God also showers His mercy, only on those who seek the gracious intervention of an āchārya.

In the sacred Kṣētra (pilgrim-centre) of Simhāchala there lived a great devotee, Śrī Kṛṣṇamāchārya. When he sang, the Lord of Simhādri danced. In the course of his pilgrimage, Śrī Rāmānuja went to Simhāchala. While he was there seated with his disciples, Śrī Kṛṣṇamāchārya used to walk along, without seeming to notice him. When God Himself was ever available to him and within his grasp, why should he bother about this ascetic? That was why he treated Rāmānuja with studied unconcern. Rāmānuja took pity on him for his egoistic state. One day he made his obeisance to Śrī Kṛṣṇamāchārya and begged

him thus: "Sir, when the Lord of Simhādri appears before you tonight at the time of your singing, kindly enquire whether Rāmānuja will have liberation; and let me know his reply." That night when Kṛṣṇamāchārya made the enquiry, the Lord replied that liberation was only for those to whom Rāmānuja gave it and not to others. This proved that even to Kṛṣṇamāchārya, who was able to enjoy God's company at will, liberation could come only through the favour of Srī Rāmānuja. Securing the gracious goodwill of an āchārya is the only established means to attain liberation from the bondage of self. The āchārya is the leader who guides the aspirants to the Heavenly Abode.

Nandagōpa is the leader; he is rich with the bliss of spiritual experience; he protects that experience from those who do not qualify for it; he saves those who seek refuge in him. Nandagōpa is the āchārya. 'Nanda' means 'one who enjoys bliss, 'gōpa' means 'one who protects.' The mansion of the leader, Nandagōpa, is the Mantra (incantation). The word 'Kōyil' means 'the abode of the Lord'; and that is the Mantra that contains and proclaims the Lord. The āchārya keeps the Mantra beyond the reach of the unworthy and saves it from falling into the ears of those who are rejected by the scriptures.

The gōpikas accost the guard not by name but by his office as "Guard of the mansion of Nandagōpa." It shows their innocence. This way of addressing a person as 'guard' or 'watch' appears wrong in the eye of the world. To be thus addressed is considered an honour by those who have close kinship with God. The individual self, who belongs to God, always does something by way of service to Him. The name derived from this service alone is the permanent name of the self. The name derived from the adjunct-body (upādhi) is impermanent. Ananta is also called 'Śeṣa' by virtue of his services to the Lord. His body becomes, in turn, an abode, a bed, a seat, a footstool, sandals, a robe, a pillow, an umbrella, to serve the needs of the Lord. As he changes his form time and again, so as to be always rendering service to the Lord, 'Ananta' has become 'Śeṣa.' He rejoices when he is addressed as 'Śeṣa.' So also the Guard of the mansion feels elated when he is addressed by the name kōyilkāppan, which signifies his relationship with God. In fact, the devotees of God are to be called by the names which signify their connection with

Him; and not by the name of the village nor by the surname nor by any other name associated with the adjunct-body. The gōpikas are very happy that the Guard is not merely keeping watch over the home of the Lord and Saviour of all the worlds, but also over a precious treasure and the lid covering it. So they call him Kōyil kāppane.

So long as the worldly-minded people sleep, deluded by ignorance, the Supreme Self, immanent in them, keeps awake and protects them (ya ēṣa suptēṣu jāgarti). But when they wake up with the knowledge of God, He goes to sleep, imposing upon them the responsibility of protecting Him. Giving Himself up entirely to His devotees, He does not appear to move until they permit Him to do so. So the gōpikas plead with the Guard of the mansion to let them in; for if they move in without his permission, Kṛṣṇa will reject them. When the Guard does not admit them, they remind him that, as the Guard of the mansion, his duty is to let in friendly supplicants and to keep out hateful opponents, and not to obstruct one and all. "You see how miserable we are, pray, be considerate and let us in." He beckons to them to enter. Then they go in and address the Watch at the entrance.

2. Koḍittonṟum tōraṇavāṣal kāppānē.

"O Keeper of the gate which shines bright with the flag and wreathed decorative arches!"

It is a long-standing traditional practice for adorers in a temple first to pay homage to the Guard of the sacred place and then to make salutation to the Keepers of the gate. A spiritual aspirant has, first of all, to withdraw the senses from their objects and turn them towards God; and this can be achieved by cultivating close association with men of piety. Then he has to bring under control Prāṇa (the Vital breath) which keeps guard over the whole body; and the body is the abode of the Supreme Self. This is the method of breath-control laid down in Yōga. After this, he has to win the favour of the mind, the principal keeper of the gate, and having gone in, contemplate on the Immanent Supreme. The gōpikas, therefore, pray to the Keeper of the gate to let them in.

At the gate shine a wreathed arch and a flag. The 'A' (Akāra) in 'Aum' (Ōmkāra) signifies that the Lord-of-all is the saviour. That is the flag. 'Fastening this idea on the mind' is signified by 'the fastening of the flag to the gate.' "Namaḥ" means: "I am not my saviour; I do not belong to myself." Meditating constantly on this meaning of 'namaḥ' is signified by the arches of the decorative wreath, Toraṇa, at the gate. So they address him as the keeper of the gate with shining flag and decorative wreath. The gōpikas prostrate before all those who count, for fear that any one of them might be an obstacle to their union with Kṛṣṇa. Apprehending danger to Rāma: the people of Ayōdhya pray to all the celestials for the sake of Rāma: Sarvān Dēvān namasyanti Rāmasyārthē. Is it strange then that the gōpikas fall prostrate before those who are closely affined to God? Śrīkṛṣṇa has got a flag fastened to his house without the knowledge of Nanda. Later, he tells his father that he has got it done so that it might stand as a mark of distinction. Are they not the most prominent people in the place? But the purpose he has in mind for doing so is altogether different. It is usual for the gōpikas to go to Kṛṣṇa's house at midnight. To enable the gōpikas to distinguish his house from the rest, he has got the flag set on his house. When Bharata is proceeding to Chitrakūṭa to meet Rāma, he sees on the way raiments of fibre fastened to the trees by Lakṣmaṇa. Seeing them, he feels exhilarated as though he sees Rāma himself before him. In a similar way, the gōpikas feel exhilarated when they see the flag on Kṛṣṇa's mansion. Flags are raised aloft near tanks and places where water is stored and served, so that travellers who are thirsty might go there on noticing the flag. Śrīkṛṣṇa is the Lake, or a place of water-storage. He will quench the thirst of those who suffer acutely from worries. He is the oasis where people journeying through the desert of bondage-of-self (Samsāra) find water for a refreshing bath and draught. The Śruti acclaims him as an oasis in the desert: "Dhanvanniva prapā asi." The Supreme Self is compared to a lake: "Eṣa Brahma praviṣṭōsmi grīṣmē śītamiva hradam: I have entered the Supreme Brahma as I enter the cool refreshing waters of a lake in summer." "Ōmkāra" is the pointer to Him as the flag is to Kṛṣṇa's house. The word "Namaḥ" is the decorative wreath, Tōraṇa. By soliciting their help only, one can reach God. 'O Keeper of the gate who protects them both, let us in'

There is the Flag-Staff in the temples. From it, we learn from a distance that a temple exists there. We bow before it and go in. Garuḍa figures on the flag. Garuḍa is the embodiment of Vēda. One who enters the temple should make salutation to Garuḍa, and then go in. Mere entrance into the temple does not enable people to attain God. Only to those who accept the authority of the Vēdas and submit to it does the Supreme, who can be known only by Śabda, deign to present Himself. So the gōpikas here glorify the Flag-staff.

3. *Maṇikkadavam tāḷ tiravāy:*

“Lift the latch of the gem-studded doors.”

In the Nandavraja even the houses of gōpikas have gem-studded doors as suggested in Pāṣuram IX. In such a case, no wonder that the mansion of the prince of gōpālas has such doors. To all in the Heavenly Abode God imparts with an even hand the same nature (dharma) and the same enjoyments (bhōga) that He has. Likewise, in the Nandavraja there is no difference between Nanda's house and the houses of gōpikas. But those who see the external beauty of Nanda's mansion get stuck, witnessing the gardens resplendent with flowers, tanks filled with refreshing waters and doors and thresholds studded with gems. These sights arrest their attention; and they stay where they are, unable to proceed further into the house. If, however, they cross the threshold and go in, they will be so enraptured by the beauty of the Supreme that they are held up there and are unable to come out. Sumantra goes to the mansion of Śrī Rāma to invite him. The beauty of the threshold is so enchanting that he has to make a special effort to cross it and go in; ‘Sa ta dantaḥpura dwāram.’ Vālmīki suggests that it needs a deliberate effort to overcome the spell of the external beauty of the threshold and cross it; and Sumantra must be a great man to have made the effort with success. External objects are outside the mind; spiritual matters are within the mind. If the mind opens out and enjoys external beauty, it shows no inclination to look in. Should it, on the other hand, look into itself, it enjoys spiritual experiences and refuses to come out of them. Kṛṣṇa is maṇi varṇa; he is of the sapphire-hue; and the gem-studded threshold and doors arrest attention and prevent admittance to Him.

Some aspirants do not reach the state of enjoying the form of the Supreme. They know the nature of their selves and remain contented in the joy that that knowledge gives. Like the Supreme, the self too has the same form of knowledge and bliss which shines by itself. But by enjoying the self, the aspirant entertains the idea that he is independent. If he enjoys the Supreme Self, he comes to realise that he is dependent upon the Supreme. Knowledge of the self and the spirit of independence generated by it are the two doors that obstruct the experience of God. The Āchārya alone can open these doors and send us in. The gōpikas here urge the keeper of the gate to open the doors himself. Īsavāsya Upaniṣad says:

*"Hiraṇ mayēṇa pātrēṇa satyasyāpi hitam mukham,
tattvam pūṣannapāvṛṇu satya dharmāya dṛṣṭa yē:*

"O Bhagavān! objects of pleasure, glittering like gold, dazzle and close the mind, which is the face of the self, and thus prevent it from having the experience of the Supreme Self. O Saviour of the supplicant! We pray, remove them Yourself for the sake of giving us a vision of Yourself." Enjoyment of sense-pleasures is the gem-studded doorway. Unless the mind is freed from them, it is not possible to have a vision of God.

The conversation that transpires between the gōpikas urging the opening of the doors and the keeper guarding the gate is briefly suggested in the pāṣuram. The commentators have amplified it in detail.

The Keeper of the gate: "Nandavraja is in the grip of fear consequent on the excessive affronts of the demons. We keep alert in our watch to save Kṛṣṇa from impending dangers. Who are you that come here in the night and ask me to open the doors?"

Gōpikas: "Bhayam bhayānāmapahāriṇi sthitē manasyanantē
mamakutra tiṣṭati.

It is said that if Ananta, who removes all fear, is enshrined in the mind, how can fear exist? Likewise, how can there be fear of danger to him, who can chase away all fear from those who merely think of him?"

Keeper of the gate: "You may have been conversant with the incarnation of Rāma. So you say this. But here we have Kṛṣṇa. The time of Rāma is Trētāyuga which is close to Kṛtayuga. This is Dwāparayuga which is close to Kaliyuga. The father of Śrī Rāma is Daśaratha who has killed demons like Śambara. His sons are valiant heroes and amiable gentlemen. The place where they have lived is 'Ayōdhya,' the unconquerable city. Their preceptors are great sages like Vasiṣṭha. The people in the city—the men, the women, the young and the old, the ignorant and the learned,—all pray to the gods for the safety of Rāma. Thus the times, the country, the father, the preceptor, the city and all the people are favourably disposed to Rāma; and so there is no need for him to fear. But how can Kṛṣṇa feel secure? The time is Dwāpara which is close to Kaliyuga. The father is Nanda of gōpa family, a man of utmost docility. The son is naughty; he delights in mischievous pranks. The place of residence is a village! and the people are innocent herdsmen! Enemies like Kamsa lie in ambush next door! In these circumstances, how can we afford to be without anxiety for Kṛṣṇa's safety?

4. *Āyar śiṟu miyarōmukku:*

Gōpikas: Why fear us? We are the young daughters of herdsmen. What danger can there be from us, women?

Keeper of the gate: Is not Sūrpaṇakha a woman? Is she not the source of all the troubles and dangers that a hero like Śrī Rāma has to face? How can we be free from fear?

Gōpikas: She is a Rākṣhasa woman. We are gōpa women. There can be no danger at all from us.

Keeper of the gate: A demon woman, Pūtana, has come in disguise as a gōpika and perpetrated harm to Kṛṣṇa.

Gōpikas: She is a woman of advanced age; and she must have learnt fraudulent tricks. But we are quite young. Why do you fear us?

Keeper of the gate: Dear Ladies! There is no room for assurance even on that score. A young calf has turned demoniac and tried to inflict harm on our little master.

Gopikas: So many of us have come together as a group. Why fear us?

Keeper of the gate: Well, we must fear evil-minded persons. Whether they come single or in groups is no matter. Has not Kṣhara and Dūṣana and others come in hordes with intent to do evil to Śrī Rāma? Let it alone. Now, explain fully the purpose of your coming here.

5. *Aṭai paṭai māyan maṇivaṇṇan nennalē vāy nērdān:*

Gopikas: Śrī Kṛṣṇa of sapphire-hue body and of mysterious power promised yesterday that he would give us the musical instrument 'paṭai.' We have come to receive it. That is the highest objective we are eager to attain.

Keeper of the gate: In that case, wait here. As soon as he wakes up, I shall tell him about your coming and get you the instrument 'Paṭai.'

Gopikas: Lord Kṛṣṇa has come to us, rendered services to us and tried to win our favour. Even if he does not fulfil our wish, he has already made us fall under the spell of that sweet, silent, handsome, auspicious and divine figure of his. We are fully under his sway and we cannot be away from him. Having won us over, he pledged his word, of his own accord, and that too only yesterday, that he would enable us to accomplish our task. Sure, he is not the one to go back upon his word. In his incarnation as Rāma he has declared: "Rama is not a double-tongued person: Rāmōdwir-nābhi bhāṣatē". In this incarnation, too, has not Kṛṣṇa declared: "The Himalayas may stir and move; the Mandara may split and

break; the ocean may sink and dry. But my word never fails, never becomes futile: "Nāṁē mōgham vachōbhavēt". Please let us in. We shall ourselves serve him and get our work done.

· Keeper of the gate: All that you say is true. But I can't let you in, until after I examine how your minds are disposed.

6. *Tūyō māy vandōm:*

Gōpikas: "We have come here, pure in mind. Our thoughts are free from any kind of contamination. You need have no fear on that account.

Purity does not mean mere cleanliness of the external body. Purity of mind is essential to those who approach God. Vibhīṣaṇa has not taken a bath before going to Śrī Rāma to seek succour. Arjuna does not take a purificatory bath when, on the field of battle, he seeks and receives spiritual instruction through Gīta from Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The gōpikas here have the same purity as Vibhīṣaṇa or Arjuna has.

Those who approach God should give up all sense of enjoyment in all matters and should feel keenly that without attaining Him they cannot live. They should not entertain the idea that their knowledge or devotion or works can be the means of attaining Him. They should have firm faith that He alone will save them; their sole objective should be to attain Him only; they should not angle for other benefits and after securing them desert Him. Those alone are pure who seek no other means and no other benefit than God Himself. Vibhīṣaṇa declares to Rāma that he has such purity: "I have left Lanka; I have given up wife and children. Rāma! You alone are my kingdom, my wealth, my friend, aye, my life." In a similar manner, the gōpikas submit that they have come there pure in mind, seeking Kṛṣṇa only. They raise their voices in the hope that the Lord, hearing their cries of agony, will surely save them. Standing in mid-air, Vibhīṣaṇa makes his submission from a distance in a dignified booming voice; and

then seeks and obtains refuge through Sugrīva. When Ānjanēya approaches Sīta, he first makes his voice heard and then goes before her and makes his submission. The gōpikas, likewise, make their eagerness and agony known, by declaring from without how they have all come there, pure in mind.

Keeper of the gate: "You say that you have come pure in mind. At the same time you say you have come with a wish to obtain 'paṇai,' the musical instrument. The two statements are mutually contradictory. How can you be pure when you seek some other benefit? Tell me the truth."

7. *Tuyi leṭa ppāḍuvān:*

Gōpikas: We have come here to sing so as to awaken him.

Keeper of the gate: Alas! Is this all your love? To awaken one who is asleep! No, it is wrong to do so.

Gōpikas: We have not come to disturb his sleep. We wish to see him while he is comfortably asleep. We wish to see his beauty as he wakes up. We have come to sing our benediction to that beauty so as to ward off the evil eye. If our aim is to get a different benefit, we will have solicited his favour in the council-hall. To see his beauty is to fulfil our desire. To sing his benediction is to attain our highest objective. Viśvāmitra feels charmed with the beauty of Rāma when the latter lies asleep. Sīta is filled with astonishment when she sees the majestic beauty of Rāma while sleeping. We have come here to see that beauty in Kṛṣṇa and sing our benediction to him. It may look strange and unnatural when, instead of the saviour going to the rescue of his solicitors, the solicitors themselves make bold to approach him. Still, even at the risk of our true nature being besmirched, we have ventured to go here as we cannot bear to keep aloof. We have taken all this trouble, which normally he should have undergone for us. When the Ṛṣis come to

seek protection from Śrī Rāma in the Daṇḍaka forest, Rāma tells them that their having to come to him is a matter of great shame for him: (Hṛī rēṣā hi mamātulā) for he should have himself gone to them earlier and saved them from misery and harassment. Our coming here, likewise, is sure to cause pain to Lord Kṛṣṇa. How unjust of you that you do not open the gate!

The Keeper of the gate is convinced of the purity of their motives; but he still mumbles some words of objection. His only aim now in detaining them is to enjoy the draught of their sweet words.

Seeing the unhelpful attitude of the numbling keeper of the gate, the gōpikas entreat him thus:

8. *Vāyāl munna munnam mātādē ammā:*

“Dear Sir, Do not at the very outset forbid entry with your words. Your word is our refuge. You are our protector. It is true that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is our master and lord. But you alone can save us. You alone should help and show us the way.” Sita tells Hanumān: “Vachā dharma mavāpnuhi” “Hanuman! You alone can accomplish the task I give you. Give your word of acceptance and be blessed.”

To the gōpikas, the keeper's word of acceptance is a cool refreshing shower: His word of forbiddance is a sharp sword-thrust—“When Vibhīṣaṇa seeks succour from Rāma, Sugrīva and others protest that he should not be given quarter as he comes from the enemy-camp; and that he deserves to be put to death. The same people later admit him into the fold on an equal footing as a solicitor of Śrī Rāma's favour. In the same way, even if you now forbid us entrance, it is you that have to take us to Kṛṣṇa's presence finally. Have mercy on us. The Supreme who, in His ire, determines to cast us into low birth will, the moment you show us favour and admit us, become exceptionally merciful and will go to such an extent as to punish those who blame us. Good sir, if you but take us to Him, He will even overlook our shortcomings and begin to love us. Śrī Rāma marries Sita and loves her intensely. Vālmīki accounts for this deep love thus:

“Priyātu Sītā Rāmasya dārāḥ pitṛkṛtāyiti:

Sītā holds the privilege of an intensely beloved wife; and the reason for this that Rāma advances is that his father has agreed to make her his wife.” Likewise, the Supreme warmly welcomes the individual self who has been accepted and commended by an āchārya. So, sir, open the door and let us in.” The Keeper of the gate listens to their prayer and knowing the purity of their motive, says! “I do not forbid your entrance. Push open the doors yourself and walk in.” Then the gōpikās urge him:

9. *Ninēṣa nilaikkadavam nikku ēlōrempāvāy*

“Pray, open these love-laden doors yourself.” The doors of the threshold seem to show as much care and attention in the protection of Śrī Kṛṣṇa as the Keeper of the gate does. The doors come tightly close to each other and keep loving watch. In the same way as Kamsa’s followers have turned hostile and tried to put an end to Kṛṣṇa, all the sentient and insentient beings in Vrēpalle have stood steadfast in love for Kṛṣṇa and tried to protect him from all dangers. The doors, too, impelled by love of Kṛṣṇa adhere close to each other and obstruct others from entering into the mansion.

It is interesting to recall what has happened during the period of the incarnation of Śrī Rāma. When Śrī Rāma goes into the woods, even the trees fade with grief. Rivers, tanks and pools turn very hot. But when they hear that Rāma is returning after killing Rāvaṇa, the trees in their ecstasy bloom with untimely fruits. Thus even the insentient things seem to possess the sentiment of love, as seen from their grief at separation from the Lord and joy at union with Him. These insentient things may be the transfigurations of great saints and sages. Kulaśēkhara has aspired that he should be transformed into the lower bar of the threshold of the shrine of Śrī Vēṅkatāchalapati, so that he may be ever in His presence and look on Him and adore Him. These doors might have been such great saints transformed into that shape. So the gōpikas hesitate to push the doors open and request the Keeper of the gate to open them.

The threshold represents the Knowledge of self...The self partakes of the nature of knowledge and bliss; yet, it clouds the subject of God (Paratatva) from becoming manifest to those who

enjoy its glory. None can open the threshold by himself. It is the āchārya alone that elevates the abidance in self-knowledge into the illumination of God-experience. In this way should the aspirant enter the home of the āchārya and earn fitness to seek his favour through the devotees. The gōpikas reach the mansion of Nanda-gōpa, entreat the Guard of the mansion and the Keeper of the gate to open the doors and then walk in.



PĀŚURAM XVII

PREFACE.

With the ten gōpikas awakened by them to the fore, the party has reached the mansion of Nandagōpa. They entreat the Guard of the mansion and the Keeper of the gate to let them in. As they enter, they find the four couches on which Nandagōpa, Yaśōda, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma lie asleep. They now awaken them one after the other in the order in which they find them. The first couch is occupied by Nanda. Troubled by anxious fear for the safety of Kṛṣṇa, Nanda is alert so as to protect him against the contingency of danger from any demon and to wean him from the allurements of gōpikas to carry him off. Yaśōda ever fond of Kṛṣṇa, who is begotten by her after a long and desperate travail of childlessness, occupies the next bed which is placed between Nanda's and Kṛṣṇa's. On the fourth bed, which is the last, Balarāma lies asleep. They are awakened, one after another, in this Pāsuram. One of the three esoteric secrets is known as Dwaya-mantra. This incantation consists of two averments: (1) I accept the feet of Nārāyaṇa as the means and Śrī (Lakṣmi) as the mediator. (2) May all the affairs undertaken by me belong not to me at all but be consecrated to the service of Śrīmannārāyaṇa. Fitness to receive this incantation comes, only after calling to mind reverently the whole succession of preceptors. Then an approach is to be made through the Mother (Śrī) to Nārāyaṇa who is the only means to attain Him. By awakening ten gōpikas, the members of the party have shown reverence to the successive āchāryās. They have earned fitness to enter Nandagōpa's mansion which is the community-centre of the āchāryas. The final objective of life is to win the favour of the āchāryā, receive from him initiation into the sacred incantation, Tirumantra, learn to know God who is enunciated in it, and cultivate the goodwill of the devotees who cling to the same God.

True, God is both the means and the end. Still, that which takes us to Him is the Mantra (Incantation). It is only through constant repetition of the mantra and meditation on its meaning

that it is possible to have a vision of Him. To one who does not seek the aid of mantra, the Supreme remains beyond the reach of his word and mind. But to one who clings to a mantra, He comes within the reach of both. That is why in Viṣṇu Sahasranāma, among His thousand names are mentioned: “Śabdātigaḥ Śabdasahaḥ” ‘One who is beyond the reach of word’ and ‘One who is within the reach of word.’ God cannot be grasped by worldly words; but He yields to Vēdic incantations. Mantra will not be efficacious if every one learns it by himself. He must be initiated into it by an āchārya if it has to be effective. That which protects by constant meditation is the mantra. How to meditate is to be learnt through the instruction of an āchārya. We cannot have a hold on the mantra unless the āchārya graciously grants it. So we have first to seek his favour; and for that, we must be free from the ego... And we must have control over the senses and the mind. The state of self-control is indicated in the gōpika’s rousing ten girls from sleep; and the state of freedom of mind and intellect from ego is shown in their entreaties to the Guard of the mansion and the Keeper of the gate to let them in.

It is not enough to have initiation into a mantra by an āchārya. It is not even enough to know God, who is the content and meaning of the mantra. It is essential to know that God becomes pleased only after the goodwill of those devotees who love and cling to Him is secured. The gōpikas know this, as is evidenced in their awakening Bala Rāma.

- (1) Awakening Nanda: Seeking the favour of āchārya.
- (2) Awakening Yaśōda: Receiving initiation into the mantra.
- (3) Awakening Kṛṣṇa: Having the vision of the Supreme.
- (4) Awakening Bala Rāma: Seeking the favour of God’s devotees.

*Ambaramē, taṇṇirē, śōṛē, aṛam śeyyum
emberumān! nandagōpālā! eḷundirāy
kombanārkellām Koḷunde! Kulaviḷakke!
emberumāṭṭi! yaśōdāy! aṛivurāy
ambaramūdaruṭṭōṅgi yulagaḷanda
umbarkōmāne! uṛaṅgādeḷundirāy
śemporkaḷalaḍi ccelvā! baladēvā
umbiyum nīyumuraṅgelō rempāvāy*

Summary.

O Nandagopa ! How great is your munificence! You clothe the naked; you quench the thirsty; you feed the hungry—and all this you do with rectitude and without expecting return. O our revered master! arise! O Yaśōda! who is like a tender shoot among women with delicate bodies resembling the prabbali trees! You, the auspicious wick of our community! Our dear mistress! Awake!

O Trivikrama! you who have grown in stature splitting the mid-sky, and measuring all the worlds with your feet! wake up! You Lord of the Nityasūras, the Ever-wise! You should not sleep. Get up.

O Balarāma! You who wear an anklet of pure shining gold on your foot! You and your brother, pray, wake up.

Commentary.

1. *Ambaramē, taṇṇirē, śōṛē, aṇam śeyyum emberumān*
Nandagōpālā eḷundirāy

“Nandagōpālā! Raiment, water, food, flow in charity from you to the needy; and you give with a generous hand. O master! Wake up.” The gōpikas praise the magnanimity of Nanda. They have gone there with a longing to get Kṛṣṇa. Nanda is large-hearted and so is sure to fulfil their wish. They are happy that they have not gone to a miser; they are there before Nanda who is capable of meeting their demands whatever they be. But Nanda is not actually noted for his charities. On the day of Kṛṣṇa's birth, it is said that he has given some charities; but at such times every one bestows gifts; and there is nothing praiseworthy about it. Then what is the magnanimity referred to here? Śrīkṛṣṇa is truly magnanimous; and the inference they draw from it is that the father of such a son should, necessarily, have been large-hearted. The son must have inherited the father's quality. It is well-known how Śrīkṛṣṇa has provided raiment to Draupadī. Again, while going to the battlefield, the horses yoked to the chariots of Pāṇḍavas feel very thirsty and there is no water anywhere. By employing Vāruṇāstra, a shaft which propitiates Varuṇa, the

god of rain, Kṛṣṇa strikes water, and with it quenches the thirst of the horses. When Kṛṣṇa, accompanied by Bala Rāma and other gōpālas, takes a ramble in the woods, his companions feel very hungry; and food is not available anywhere. Then Kṛṣṇa sends them to the place where a sacrificial rite is being performed, and tells them to ask for food in his name. The munis in their preoccupation with the rite do not pay heed to their request. Hearing what has happened, Kṛṣṇa directs his companions to go to the wives of the anchorites and make their request. The women rejoice in having this good fortune of offering food to Kṛṣṇa, and hasten to him with food, quite unmindful of their husbands. Then Kṛṣṇa has the food served to his companions by the wives of the anchorites. Thus Kṛṣṇa has made a name for his liberal bestowal of raiment, water and food on those who are in urgent need of them. These very things they attribute to Nanda and praise him.

When Nanda makes a gift of anything, it looks as though he has only that thing in abundance; because whatever he gives, he gives without stint. When he makes the gift, he makes it because he thinks it is his duty to do so. He does not expect anything in return. On the other hand, he thinks that it is his good fortune that recipients are forthcoming; and he praises them as magnanimous persons in as much as they have deigned to receive the gifts. The charities of Nanda are different from those of Daśaratha. The latter has to do a great penance to have sons. Without having to do any penance, Nanda could have Kṛṣṇa for his son. The charities Nanda gives are all meant to bring his son victory and good fortune; he does not have any selfish ends in view. He does things as a matter of duty. God is the effective means, Siddhōpāya. He is also righteousness, Dharma. He is the instrument to attain Him. Even if we have attained Him, it is essential for us to perform our duties (works) such as sacrificial rites, penance and charity, for the safety and victory of the Supreme, who is Himself the perfect Dharma. That is what we learn from Nandagōpa's practice. That is why Śrīkṛṣṇa considers all those recipients magnanimous—all those who come to him in need and receive wealth, prosperity, self-knowledge or Himself. The gōpikas believe that in this Kṛṣṇa shows an inherited quality.

The gōpikas praise the munificence of Nandagōpa as they are sure that he will show the same spirit in granting them their desire. But women have no eligibility for receiving charities. No one bestows gifts on them. How then are the gōpikas to be benefited by his munificence? There is a spiritual truth involved in this. Clothes impart beauty to the human figure; water sustains the body; and food nourishes it. To the gōpikas, Śrīkṛṣṇa is alike beauty-aid, sustenance and nourishment. What different things like raiment, water and food confer on others, Kṛṣṇa alone bestows on the gōpikas. And that Kṛṣṇa is under Nanda's control; and so they pray that Nanda should give Kṛṣṇa to them.

Nandagōpāla is the āchārya. He is 'Nanda,' because 'he enjoys bliss—the bliss that is born of the experience of God. The letter 'go' in Sanskrit means Vēda (or Scripture). 'Gōpāla' means 'one who protects and sustains the Vēdas (Scriptures),' by studying them, knowing them, practising them and propagating them. He who is enriched with reverent and thorough study of the Vēdas and with abiding experience of God can alone be an Āchārya. And he is Nandagōpāla. Nanda is the father of Kṛṣṇa; and in his capacity as father, he has gained such authority that his son will do exactly what he bids him do. And this is indicated in the opening Pāṣuram (Pāṣuram I) in the words "Nandagōpan kumaran; son of Nanda." The gōpikas have undertaken this rite in the hope that Nanda will certainly make Kṛṣṇa available to them as he is his son. In the previous Pāṣuram, they have recalled the leadership of Nandagōpa: "Nāyaganāy ninṇa Nandagōpan." They have believed that as Nanda is their leader, it is his responsibility to lead them to Kṛṣṇa. In this pāṣuram they praise the magnanimity of Nanda. His high-mindedness lies in the acute misery he undergoes until he affords relief to those in need of raiment, water or food; it lies again in the spirit in which he makes the gifts—he gives for his own relief and not to benefit others. Will not Nanda, who supplies sustenance and nourishment to all, give them, too, their sustenance and nourishment which they find in Kṛṣṇa himself?

An āchārya too must have three qualities:—

- (1) He should have God's complete acquiescence in whatever he does.

(2) He should have the competence to lead individual selves to the Supreme Self.

(3) He should have the magnanimity that hastens to relieve the individual selves of their agony and takes the initiative that works for their attainment of God.

The āchārya gives us ambaram (raiment) water and food. 'Ambaram' means (1) raiment (Vastra) and (2) space (Ākāśa). What shines everywhere is Ākāśa; and it is therefore the Supreme Self. The Upaniṣad avers:

*"Ākasāddhyēva khalvimāni bhūtāni jāyante;
Ākāśohavai nāmarūpa yor nirvahitā;*

All the elements that are visible to sight emerge only from space. It is space again that gives form and name." Thus the Upaniṣad regards Space as the phenomenal cause of the entire universe. The āchārya places the Supreme in the hands of those who aspire for attaining Him. The Heavenly Abode "Śrī Vaikunṭha" is also known as "Parama Vyōma," (Parama ākāśa). As the āchārya gives us paramapada, he may be deemed to be giving us ambaram or space. 'Ambaram' also means 'raiment.' Dress imparts beauty to form. What gives beauty to self-knowledge is the brightness of God's countenance. When we see an object of beauty, our faces bloom as we enjoy it. That individual self, on seeing whom the Supreme's countenance blooms, must be regarded as beautiful. It is the āchārya who provides the implement to get that beauty. Bloom appears on the countenance of the Supreme, only when He sees the individual selves commended by the āchārya.

After marriage, Śrī Rāma and Sīta are presented as enjoying intense mutual love. In accounting for Rāma's excessive fondness for Sīta, Vālmiki denies that it is due to her physical charms or to the excellence of her qualities. He maintains that it is because his father has arranged and approved of this alliance in matrimony that Sīta becomes so dear to Rāma. ("Priyātu Sīta Rāmasya dārāḥ pitṛkṛtāyiti). Likewise, the Supreme's face blooms on seeing the individual self, because the latter has been moulded and commended by the āchārya. It is thus that the āchārya is instrumental in aiding the beauty of the individual self by securing, for his raiment, the bloom on the face of God. It is the āchārya that invests the

individual self with a sublime and subtle essence which makes the self worthy of being enjoyed by the Supreme.

It is again the āchārya that gives cool water to quench the thirst. To the individual self who is exhausted in his journey through the lonely wilderness of bondage-to-birth (Samsāra) and scalded with burning desires of senses, the āchārya gives the cool, refreshing waters of the names of God through which His attributes and deeds are made manifest; and thus quenches his thirst. To obtain the subtle and sublime essence and to have the experience of God, the individual self should have a bath in the river Virajā, which is beyond the domain of Primal Nature. With that bath, connection with the body is snapped. The body which is the product of Primal Nature with its three fundamental qualities, disappears; and in its place, rises a body composed of perfect purity and fit for spiritual experience. This is what is implied in providing 'water to drink.' In the same way as the body cannot sustain without water, the individual self cannot stand without the worship of God. It is to that self that the āchārya gives fitness to worship the Primal Cause of the universe, "Tajjalān," as declared in the Upaniṣads. If the garment is a beauty-aid to the body, the glow on the face of the Lord is a beauty-aid to the individual self. The body must be first sustained; then only arises the need of its being beautified. The body has to be sustained with water, nourished with food and then beautified with raiment. For physical existence food, water and clothing are primary needs. For spiritual life also these three are essential. The bloom on God's countenance gives beauty to the individual self. But the self should not entertain the idea that this glow gives *him* happiness. Water sustains the body; likewise the glow on God's face sustains the form of the self; but it is essential that the self should have no desire of *enjoying* it. The services that the self renders are the cause for the glow on His countenance; the self will have certain spiritual experiences while rendering service. While having those experiences, there should be no feeling that *he* is enjoying them for *his own sake*. It is the absence of personal selfishness in enjoying spiritual experience that is signified by 'water.' Space which is the very nature of the Supreme is the raiment. The water is the faith-inspired earnestness (*śraddha*) in knowing His nature and attaining Him. This *śraddha* is what sustains the self. As physical body is sustained by water, the self is sustained by earnestness and ardour which are imbued with firm faith.

Again, it is the āchārya that provides food. Food nourishes the body. Intense experience of God in all its fulness sustains the self. The self regards that spiritual experience in this way "Ahamanna mahamanna mahamannādōhamannādaḥ: "I am food, I am food, I eat food; I eat food." The self offers himself as food to be enjoyed by the Supreme Self, and he, in his turn, enjoys the Supreme as food. Thus Experience of God is food, and it is the āchārya that gives perfect God-experience. Giving food implies the whole process of: (1) imparting to the self the three qualities (Ākāras) of (a) belonging to Him and to no other (*ananya śēṣatva*) (b) taking refuge in Him and in no other (*ananya śaraṇatva*) (c) offering himself to be enjoyed by Him and by no other (*ananya bhōgyatva*); (2) making the self fit to reach the highest end through rendering consecrated service to Him, and (3) rendering the self worthy of being enjoyed by the Supreme. The āchārya is thus magnanimous in providing generously clothing, water and food to those who are in need of them.

Raiment: Glow on God's countenance.

Water: Lack of selfish enjoyment.

Food: Service consecrated to God.

Raiment: (Ambaram) or Vastram, Supreme Self.

Water: Faith-imbued earnestness to attain Him.

Food: Perfect knowledge of the nature of self.

Raiment: (Ambaram) or space, Heavenly Abode, known as Ākāśa Parama vyōma; Subtle and sublime essence into which the body is transformed.

Water: Bath in the river Virajā.

Food: Experience of God.

Like Nandagōpa, the āchārya gives these three—raiment, water and food—to his disciples as a matter of duty and without expectation of return.

The gōpikas regard Nanda as their Swāmi, master and lord, because he has conferred great benefits on them. Though Kṛṣṇa is their master, they call Nanda their master; because Nanda who has Kṛṣṇa under his control, is magnanimous in taking them

to Kṛṣṇa and allowing them to have him. "Swami" means "owner of property". The gōpikas regard themselves as "the property of Nanda," and so are dependent upon him. In the same way, we have to regard the āchārya as our master and ourselves as his own belongings. That is how it has become a traditional convention to address the āchārya as "Swāmi." The gōpikas entreat Nandagōpa to wake up. The waking up of the āchārya symbolises the preceptor's preparedness to impart instruction and to initiate the disciple into spiritual life with an incantation (Mantra). Nandagōpa gives whatever a person needs; he has a charitable disposition; he is the master and lord; and he is the protector of gōpas. That shows him as protector of all living creatures, protector of dharma, and protector of his own community. Will not Nanda, who gives whatever one needs without any distinction, satisfy the gōpikas of their wish? As he has a high sense of duty, will he not consider it his dharma to save those who are in trouble? Are not the gōpikas in acute misery? As he is a gōpāla, will he not show consideration to the gōpikas who are of his community and help them out? With such hopes as these, the gōpikas address him as master (Swāmi) and wake him up.

Describing the characteristic features of Śrī Rāma, who is God's incarnation as the perfect human being, Vālmiki says:

*"Rakṣitā jīvalōkasya dharmasya parirakṣitā
Rakṣitasvasya dharmasya swajanasyacha rakṣitā.*

Protector of Jīvalōka, the world of living creatures; protector of Dharma, righteousness; protector of his own duty (swadharma), protector of his own people, swajana". These qualities are fully in evidence in Nandagōpa as well. The āchārya also makes no distinction of people as his own and others, but treats all the living creatures alike and protects them, giving them what they need. He protects his own dharma (duty) by deeming himself as an absolute dependent on God. He undertakes, of his own accord, the duty of protecting the disciples who cling to him. Nanda wakes up and permits them to enter. Then the gōpikas awaken Yaśōda who is lying asleep on the next bed.

2. *Kombanārkellām koḷundē kula viḷakkē!
Emberumāṁṇi Yaśōdāy aṇivuraṅy*

“ O Yaśōda: Who is like a tender shoot among women with delicately turned bodies like prabbali trees! You, the auspicious wick of our community! Our dear mistress, wake up.”

According to accepted convention, a devotee should obtain the prior favour of the Divine Mother and through her seek refuge in the Supreme Lord. A doubt may naturally arise as to why Nanda is aroused before Yaśōda. Nandagōpa is greatly attached to Kṛṣṇa; and so out of anxiety for Kṛṣṇa's safety, he keeps alert with spear in hand even while he bars entry with the couch on which he lies. Yaśōda loves her husband; and she is fond of her son; so reluctant to keep aloof from either, occupies the bed laid between the two. The gōpikas do not follow the convention either because they are ignorant, or because they forget it in their anguish, or because they fear Nanda so much that they are afraid to pass him by and reach Yaśōda first. So they awaken Nandagōpa first.

Nanda is the āchārya and Yaśōda the mantra (incantation). Viewed in this way, it is right to solicit the favour of the āchārya so as to be initiated into the spiritual discipline of a mantra. To attain the Lord, one should seek the good will of the Mother first. But to receive initiation into a mantra, one should secure the graciousness of a preceptor. The gōpikas therefore arouse Nanda first and then only Yaśōda.

Yaśōda lies on the middle couch with her child on one side and her husband on the other. She is the mother, when she turns to the child suckling and fondling him. She is the wife, when she turns to her husband and pleases him with her amorous embrace. Her position indicates that of the Divine Mother, Lakṣmi, who brings about the meeting between the individual self and the Supreme Self. The individual selves are her children and the Supreme her husband. Unable to be aloof from either, she takes the middle position.

There are three letters in the Praṇava, A.U.M. The middle letter ‘U’ indicates the inseparable relationship between ‘A,’ the Supreme Self, and ‘M’ the individual self. ‘U’ thus signifies the Divine Mother, Śrī or Lakṣmi. The position of Yaśōda between Nanda and Kṛṣṇa is of similar significance. It is noteworthy that ‘Śrī’ has two derivatives: ‘Śrīyata; one who is solicited by the self; (2) one who solicits the Supreme Self. Speaking about Sita, the Rāmāyaṇa avers:

*"Trayāṇām Bharatādinām Bhrātrūṇām dēvatā
chayā Rāmasyacha manaḥ kāntā.*

"that she is a goddess to Bharata and his brothers and the beloved of Rāma"—thus giving both the relationships. Saint Rāmānuja while seeking succour from the Divine Mother, elucidates her inseparable connection with both the Supreme Lord and the individual selves; "the Consort of the Lord of immortals and the Mother of the whole universe."

"Dēvadēvā Divya mahiṣīm, akhila jagannātaram."

'Prabbali' tree grows on the margin of flowing streams. It bends under the force of impact of the current; but straightens up and stands after the current passes. By bringing a woman into comparison with this tree, the natural tender delicateness of a woman and her resilience and skill in adapting herself to her husband according to circumstances, are indicated. Among such women, Yaśōda takes the pride of place, the place that the tender shooting twig takes on the crown of a tree. Again, whatever part of the tree is attacked by a pest, it is the tender twig that first shrivels up. Likewise, it is Yaśōda who loses colour when anguish is experienced by the gōpikas. Sīta is described in the Rāmāyaṇa as the greatest benefactor among womankind. (Nārīṇā muttamā vadhūḥ.) This extreme benevolence becomes manifest when Sīta guarantees protection even to the Rākṣasa women who have given her the greatest trouble. The gōpikas address Yaśōda as the most benevolent among women, feeling certain that she will guarantee a meeting for them with Kṛṣṇa.

They address her as 'the auspicious wick of their community.' The lamp gives light making itself and all other things bright and visible. They pray that Yaśōda who shines with the halo of spiritual experience will bestow on them the happiness born out of it.

They address her as their 'Swāmini,' mistress. 'Śrī' and 'Śrīpati,' Lakṣmi and her consort Viṣṇu, are respectively our 'Mistress' and 'master.' Nanda and Yaśōda are to give them their lord; and so they address them as 'master' and 'mistress.' Yaśōda is the mantra; and mantra protects God by hiding Him in her womb. Yaśōda protects Kṛṣṇa by concealing him from all except close and reliable dependants. The word "Yaśōda"

itself means 'one who gives fame.' In the world, nobility of birth and family-connections, and wealth and prosperity, contribute to fame. Mantra can bring forth all these together; and mantra is Yaśōda. "Tasyanāma mahadyaśaḥ": "His name is Great Fame." Fame is the Supreme Self; and as Yaśōda bestows Him, she is the Mantra.

There are many mantras (incantations) proclaiming the Lord, which are in use for meditation. Three among them stand out prominently. These three are considered the best, because they propound the all-pervasiveness of the Supreme Lord:—

1. Viṣṇu Ṣaḍākṣari: Six-letter incantation on Viṣṇu.
2. Vāsudēva Dwādaśākṣari: Twelve-letter incantation on Vāsudēva.
3. Nārāyaṇa aṣṭākṣari: Eight-letter incantation on Nārāyaṇa.

These three incantations alone make known His all pervasiveness. Again, though the words 'Viṣṇu' and 'Vāsudeva' make manifest the pervasiveness of God, it is the word 'Nārāyaṇa' alone that explains fully how the Lord pervades in every object. This incantation on Nārāyaṇa (Nārāyaṇa aṣṭākṣari) is called Tiru-mantra (the great incantation). The tender twig that shoots forth on the tree's crown is the most outstanding among the parts of a tree; so is Yaśōda, the Tirumantra, to all other women who represent other incantations. In the same way as the resilient prabbali tree bends before the swift current of the stream, this Tirumantra adjusts and adapts itself, so as to fulfil the needs and desires of worldly people who are subject to the bondage-of-self. Thus the Tirumantra yields the fruits of the mundane world, even as it fulfils the Paramārtha, the highest end worthy of pursuit. By its close connection with Śrīmahā Viṣṇu, this Mantra imparts His nature to the supplicants and makes that prapanna community shine bright. It is said that the Mantra is the mother and the āchārya is the father. (Mantrō mātāguruḥ pitā). It is the Tirumantra that has given protection to the Supreme Self. Among the three who are privileged to claim the Supreme as son—Kausalya, Dēvaki and Yaśōda—Yaśōda is the greatest. The other two have not been able to enjoy the good fortune of being always with their sons. It is given only to Yaśōda to enjoy the company of her

son and exercise authority over him even to the extent of binding him and beating him. The Tirumantra, like Yaśōda, enthalls the entire Phenomenon of God and makes It visible to others. We have to regard this mantra as our swāmini, mistress. To awaken Yaśōda means to make the meaning of Tirumantra clear to us. Having aroused the āchārya (Nanda) and the mantra (Yaśōda), the gōpikas now awaken the Mantrārtha, the meaning and the goal of the mantra (Kṛṣṇa).

3. *Ambaramūḍaruttōṅgi yulagaḷunda umbar kōmāṇē
uraṅgādu eḷundirāy:*

“O! Nityasūra nāyaka, you, Lord of the ever-wise immortals! who, splitting the firmament midway, have grown in stature and measured with your feet all the worlds! Give up your sleep and awake!”

Lest he should refuse to get up without the permission of his parents, the gōpikas have taken their prior consent and now advance to Kṛṣṇa's bed to awaken Him. They glorify the incarnation of Vāmana. Unable to endure the sight of Indra's miserable plight, the Lord has chosen to incarnate as a dwarf Brahmin mendicant; and immediately on receiving the gift, He has grown in stature, measured the three worlds with His feet and restored the kingdom to Indra. Will not such a merciful Lord come to their rescue, seeing their harrowing tears of grief? Already there has been a reference to Vāmana in Pāsuram III; and there will be another in Pāsuram XXIV. This incarnation is an illustration of the limitless lengths to which His unaccountable love for His creatures takes Him. In this world, we find only some people receiving protection from others for some ostensible reason. But the Lord is the unaccountable Saviour of all people. He saves those who solicit His favour and those also who do not; He saves the sentient and the insentient alike; and it is not possible to assign any reason for His doing so. When such is the case, will He not deign to be the Saviour of the gōpikas? The gōpikas recall the story of Vāmana as they awaken Kṛṣṇa. There seems to be an implied taunt in this prayer for protection. “Can one who has undertaken the task of protection afford to go to sleep? Should he not be ever alert? Why then this slumber? Could it be that your help is only for males who seek kingdoms and other such benefits and not for gōpikas who desire you and no other benefit? Why this sleep?

Could you not give us the happiness of your touch, which, unasked, you have given to all and sundry, when measuring the worlds with your feet? For the benefit of the celestials, you have chosen to become a mendicant and beg for alms. Could it be that you are put out by our coming to you to beg? Otherwise, how to account for this sleep? You have condescended to bless with your touch trees, mountains and other insentient things, which have no power to appreciate your greatness. Does it appear unbecoming of you if you but touch those who come to you with knowledge of your greatness? Why this indifference and sleep? You, who give bliss to the Ever-wise by your darśan, have, in measuring the worlds, put to strain your divine lotus-feet which we revere as our crest-ornaments. How infinite is your love and how limitless your freedom? You who toil hard, day and night, for the Pāṇḍavas become quite upset, when in response to Draupadi's cry for help, 'Gōvinda,' you have failed to present yourself before her but given her only the clothes she is in need of. You have blamed yourself for your hard-heartedness and become restless like one who is burdened with heavy irrepayable debts. How could it be possible for you to be asleep while we are burning with anguish for you? You need not become a dwarf for our sake, nor need you turn to begging, nor need you accomplish the mighty task of measuring the worlds. It is enough if you just open your eyes and allow us to have a glimpse of the enchanting beauty of your divine form. Are you not the same Śrī Rāma who has spent restless days and sleepless nights wailing for Sita's misery during her separation from him? How is it you sleep now unconcerned? Is it because you are tired with measuring the worlds? Are your feet sore on account of friction with rock and stump? Pray, get up. How long will you sleep?" The gōpikas think of the nature of Nārāyaṇa, as propounded in Nārāyaṇa mantra. The word "nāramulu" means "all objects," and "ayana" means "place." "Nārāyaṇa is He who permeates all things and who sustains all things in Himself. In the incarnation of Vāmana, this all-permeating quality is exhibited. So they glorify it. "Ambara" means Ākāśa (Space); and the word Sūnya (Vacancy) is used as its synonym. Vāmana-incarnation sets at naught all those who reject the scriptures and advance the theory that there is nothing but vacancy. This incarnation establishes firmly that there is an all-permeating power by proving His presence everywhere. This is exactly what Nārāyaṇamantra

does. You are perhaps proud that all is yours, both eternal glory (nityavibhūti) and sportive splendour (līlāvibhūti) and you present it to the Ever-wise, nityasūras, and demonstrate it in measuring the worlds. Is it fair that you show that pride to us, who humbly approach you with love? Is it meet that you pretend to be asleep? Pray, arise." Kṛṣṇa is unmoved and continues to sleep, thinking that the gōpikas who should have aroused his elder brother before him have not done so out of ignorance. Divining what is in Kṛṣṇa's mind, the gōpikas move to the next bed and awaken Bala Rāma.

4. *Sam porkaḷal adiccelvā Baladēvā umbiyum nīyum uraṅgē.ō rempāvāy*

"O affluent Bala Rāma, wearing the red gold anklet! We pray that you and your brother will wake up." The privilege that Lakṣmaṇa has enjoyed as younger brother in the incarnation of Rāma, you now enjoy as elder brother of Kṛṣṇa. Lakṣmaṇo Lakṣmīsampannaḥ. Lakṣmaṇa is blessed with wealth, the wealth of consecrated service to the Lord. With such affluence as yours, how is it you go to sleep, unlike Lakṣmaṇa who has kept alert always, day and night? Lakṣmaṇa his eagerly hoped to serve Śrīrāma when he is in the company of Sīta. Your nature, too, is to rejoice in seeing us and Kṛṣṇa together. How then can you justify your remaining asleep?" When Śrī Kṛṣṇa goes to Mathura, the gōpikas fear that he will not return to their village, once he tastes the sweet words of the refined women-folk there. Kṛṣṇa divines the workings of their minds and sends Bala Rāma to them as his ambassador:

*Sandēśai ssāma madhuraiḥ prēma garbhairagarvitaiḥ,
Rāmēṇāśvāsītā gōpyaḥ hariṇāhṛta chētasah.*

Balarāma mollifies the gōpikas with soft and sweet consoling words, which are free from showiness and which overflow with love. The gōpikas wonder how such a considerate ambassador who should now be helping them to join Kṛṣṇa could go to sleep. So they point out the impropriety and tell him to wake up. Bala Rāma has a gold anklet on his foot. The six children borne by Dēvaki are done away with. The seventh, Bala Rāma, is transferred from Dēvaki's to Rōhiṇi's womb; and he has thus escaped Kamsa's wrath and survived. Believing that Kṛṣṇa, who is born after him, has survived because of Bala Rāma's auspicious influence, Bala Rāma is adorned with an anklet. Seeing that

anklet-bearing foot, which has been responsible for saving their master for their good, the gōpikas seek its favour. Knowing the supremacy of Śrīmannārāyaṇa as propounded by the Tirumantra and feeling that we belong to Him, is good. That shows that we have grasped the meaning of the mantra. But it is better that we understand that we belong to His devotees also, as that is the essence of the meaning of the Mantra. It is important that we should know from the aṣṭākṣari, eight-letter mantra, that we belong to the devotees of God rather than to God. Śrī Tirumangai Ālwār declared that by constant repetition of the Eight-letter incantation he has come to realise that he is the servant of the Lord's servants. We learn from the Rāmāyaṇa that we should approach God through His devotees and not directly. Guha, Sugrīva, Ānjanēya, Vibhīṣaṇa and others sought Śrī Rāma's favour through Lakṣmaṇa. The gōpikas now try to attain Śrīkṛṣṇa through Bala Rāma, who is no other than Lakṣmaṇa in another form. Rendering service to God's devotees is doing service to God Himself. Belonging to God's devotees implies and includes belonging to God Himself. The anklet on Bala Rāma's foot signifies 'belonging to God.' The foot of Balarāma which is adorned with the anklet symbolises belonging to God's devotees. The address "Baladēva" suggests that he is the incarnation of Śeṣa:

"Prakṣṣṭavijnāna balaika dhāmani: One who possesses the strength of exalted wisdom"; and that is Ādiśeṣa. He is called Śeṣa because all his services are consecrated only to God. "O Baladēva! you are sleeping because of the bliss of His touch. But does sleep fit in with you? You lie still because of your natural dependence on him and subservience. He lies still, because it is improper for him to rise before his elder brother does. Is it fair and justifiable for you both to adopt this indifference? There is none dearer to him than you. Rāma has managed to live for a year in separation from Sita; but he cannot stand a moment's separation from Lakṣmaṇa; and when the latter falls into a swoon on the battle-field, Rāma wails in agony. In this incarnation, too, he cannot live without you. So you alone should awaken him. You are his couch. Those who lie on the couch sleep. But does the couch itself sleep? How strange! You are His resting-place; and He is our resting place. While you continue to be His couch, vouchsafe to us our resting-place in Him. God rests in the hearts

of His devotees; and His devotees rest in Him. We are now prostrating at your feet begging you to awaken the Lord. If you should now fail to concede our conjoint request, maybe, you have to come to us later and seek our favour, individually. Therefore, hasten to answer our prayer. We request that you and your brother will wake up without delay." God obeys the āchārya (who is strong in wisdom and who has an abiding conviction that he belongs entirely to Him), with the same humility with which a younger brother obeys his elder brother. So it is, that we should first seek favour at the feet of God's devotees; and with their mediation, find refuge in God.

In awakening Nanda, Yaśōda, Kṛṣṇa and Bala Rāma the gōpikas instruct us about the process by which sentient beings can get salvation. It begins with earning the goodwill of the āchārya, followed by initiation into a mantra; and then by constant repetition of the mantra arriving at its meaning; and finally it culminates with assimilating the essence of the meaning of the mantra, which is the abiding conviction that we belong entirely to God's devotees.



PĀŚURAM XVIII

PREFACE.

As soon as they see Lord Kṛṣṇa lying on the bed before them, the gōpikas, in their eagerness to enjoy him, hope that they can awaken him at once. But Kṛṣṇa has not chosen to wake up. Then they awaken Bala Rāma. Still they find Kṛṣṇa unmoved. Then they come to their senses and realise that they should have first approached Nīlādēvi and sought her intercession. Now they supply the omission by awakening Nīlādēvi.

There are two stages in spiritual life; the first the stage of seeking and the second of enjoying the Supreme Self. The gōpikas have marched far in the first stage of seeking. They have sought the goodwill of the worthy; they have improved their spiritual equipment; they have freed themselves from egoism; they have won the favour of the āchārya by their loyal services; they have received the initiation into a mantra; yet they have not attained their objective. The stage of seeking is not complete. There is one more step. They have to seek the intercession of the Divine Mother; and they are certain to attain the Lord through her interest and mediation. The Divine Mother is also called 'Puruṣakāra' or the influencing agency. She is the mediator. She influences the Supreme Lord in such a way as to bestow bountifully all that the individual selves crave for. In determining on whom to shower favours and on whom not, and in what measure, the Supreme Lord gives prominence to the ~~works of~~ individual selves and acts with independence and irrevocability. The individual selves are not free, being subject to ~~their own~~ works. Mahālakṣmī, who occupies the place of the Mother, is full of considerateness for the individual selves. At the same time, she also enjoys loving familiarity with Him. Because of her gracious concern, she is unable to bear the sight of the miserable struggles of the individual selves who are bound by their works; and knowing that they cannot get rid of their sins by their own efforts, she persuades them to seek God's grace; and thus tries to bring them joy by purification of sins. Taking advantage of His loving familiarity with her,

she exercises a softening influence so as to tone down His rigidity and to induce Him to save the supplicants without reckoning their works. Without her mediation, it is impossible for individual souls to find rescue from their sins, and to reach the Supreme. Recognising that her mediation is essential to reach the Lord, the gōpikas awaken Nīlādēvi.

When Śrīmannārāyaṇa reigns as the Supreme Lord in the Heavenly Abode, Śrīdēvi, Bhūdēvi and Nīlādēvi are His consorts. Śrīdēvi is the principal consort; and the other two are part and parcel of her. We have to seek principally the favour of Śrīdēvi. In His state as Paratattva or Supreme Phenomenon, all the three attend on Him as Consorts. But in His vyūhāvasta, state of sleeping-awareness, on the ocean of milk, only Śrīdēvi and Bhūdēvi attend on Him. When the Supreme Self incarnates in the world, Bhūdēvi is His consort in Varahāvatāra; Śrīdēvi in the form of Sīta is His consort in Rāmāvatāra; and Nīlādēvi is His consort in Kṛṣṇāvatāra. So in these incarnations, approach to the Lord has to be made through the appropriate consorts. Some hold the opinion that in Kṛṣṇāvatara, Rādhādevi is the unique consort and she does not share that position with any other. Some others consider Rukmiṇi and Satyabhāma as the consorts, the former as the Pattamahīṣi, Installation-Queen. But according to the Dravidian tradition, the pride of place as the Installation-Queen goes to Nīlādēvi. As she comes from the same community as Kṛṣṇa, she is considered unequalled by others. She is the daughter of Kumbha, brother of Yaśōda. Kṛṣṇa has married her by fulfilling the pre-condition of yoking together seven refractory bulls. In Dravida scriptures, Nīlādēvi receives prominent mention. In the first prayer ślōka, it is mentioned that Gōdādēvi has aroused Kṛṣṇa who is sleeping with Nīlādēvi. "Nīlā tunga sthanagiri taḷi suptam."

It is Śrī who makes us aware that God is the only means of attaining Him and helps us in the process of reaching Him. Again, she is there with Him and thus becomes attainable by us along with Him. Thus Śrī is the main influence in directing us as the mediator to His footstool. God alone is the effective means. Our objective is to attain both Śrī and Śrīpati. We belong to that Divine couple. The worthiest end for us to pursue is to render consecrated service to both of them.

The word 'Śrī' has six different meanings: (1) One who solicits support (2) one whose support is sought. She is 'Śrī' because she always adheres to the Lord and is inseparable from Him as sparkle is from a gem, as fragrance is from a flower, and as radiance is from the sun. She is 'Śrī' because she is sought after by all sentient beings. Taking advantage of her privileged position beside the Lord, she helps to secure salvation to her supplicants. 'Śrī' also means (3) one who listens and (4) one who communicates what one hears. She listens to the prayers of individual selves and conveys them to Śrīmannārāyaṇa. 'Śrī' also means (5) one who helps ripening (6) one who causes infliction of pain. She shapes individual selves and makes them ripe and fit for soliciting God's favour. She influences God to subject the sins of the aspirants to destruction. She thus initiates the process of purification which is necessarily painful. Thus Śrī is the principal instrument in securing refuge in God; it is therefore essential to make the approach through her. No mediation is required in supplicating *her* grace. Her unaccountable mercy is our refuge. Water is required to quench the fire. For the fury of water to subside, water alone is required. Hanumān makes a thorough search of Lanka and not finding Sita becomes dispirited. Preparing to go to Aśōkavana, the only place in Lanka yet to be investigated, Hanumān breathes a prayer in all humility: "Namōstu Rāmāya sa Lakṣmaṇāya, dēvyaiḥa tasyai Janakātmajāyai: "Salutation to Rāma companioned by Lakṣmaṇa! Salutation to Dēvi, daughter of Janaka!" After making obeisance to Sita, Hanumān earnestly prays that she may condescend to show herself to him, in the same way as she has presented herself to Janaka.

In the previous Pāsuram, the gōpikas are shown as addressing Baladēva and seeking his help as they believe that he is the fittest person to intercede on their behalf. They now recognise that even for him the approach to the Lord is through 'Śrī'; and so they awaken Nīlādēvi. BalaRāma is Lakṣmaṇa during the incarnation of Rāma. Rāma dissuades Lakṣmaṇa from accompanying him into the woods when he offers to do so. Then it seems Lakṣmaṇa has wooed him through Sita to wring his consent. "Sītā muvāchā tiyasā Rāghavam cha mahā vrataṁ: He first makes his wish known to Sita and then seeks "the consent of

Sīta and then also of Rāma"; by thus approaching him through Sīta he gets his wish fulfilled. That is why the gōpikas now awaken Nīlādēvi; otherwise Kṛṣṇa will not wake up.

Kākāsura, like Rāvaṇāsura, deserves the punishment of death for committing an outrage on Sīta; but ŚrīRāma does not kill him; he aims his arrow to destroy one of the eyes of Kākāsura. "Vadhārha mapi kākūtsaḥ kṛpāya paryapālayat." It is because Sīta is present beside Rāma at that time, that Kākāsura escapes death. ŚrīRāma, out of sheer grace, leaves with a light punishment Kākāsura, who has deserved death for his crime. Though the crime committed by Kākāsura and Rāvaṇāsura is the same, namely outrage on Sīta, Kākāsura has his head saved because the Divine mother is present; Rāvaṇāsura has his head chopped off, because she is not present at the scene. Śūrpaṇakha has come to grief because of a wrong approach; she has attempted to bypass and keep aloof the mediator, the Divine Mother, and wished to enjoy ŚrīRāma alone. Rāvaṇa has come to ruin, because he has attempted to keep the Lord at a distance and wished to enjoy Sīta alone. Thus we see that only those who win the favour of Sīta before they solicit refuge in Rāma can get over their sorrows and attain happiness. The Divine Couple is inseparable. We must serve them both together; to attempt to enjoy either, separately, is to invite danger. Sūgrīva has lost his Kingdom and his wife; he has taken shelter on the cliff of a mountain with four others; he has become worthy of Sīta's favour in as much as she has chosen to cast the bundle containing her ornaments near him. Because of this, he is able to win Rāma's friendship and support, with which he has destroyed his foe, got back his kingdom and his wife and enjoyed the great privilege of rendering devoted service to ŚrīRāma. Vibhīṣaṇa, too, has earned the goodwill of Sīta by his gesture in making available to her the loyal services of his wife and daughter. On account of this solicitude for Sīta he could sever connections with the wicked Rāvaṇa and receive succour from ŚrīRāma, and get installed as King of Lanka. He has become prominent among the devoted servitors of ŚrīRāma. On seeing the fascinating beauty of ŚrīRāma and Lakṣmaṇa, Hanumān has fallen under their spell, at a time when Sīta is away. But he reaches perfection in his state of devotion, only after he meets Sīta and receives her gracious favour. He sees Sīta under

the Simsupa tree in Lanka; overhears her words of good counsel to Rāvaṇa; and then gets a clearer understanding of the nature of self and of the Supreme Self. With this spurt in knowledge comes the awareness that he is not Rāma's messenger, as he has been hitherto declaring, but Rāma's servant. It is only after he is purified by his meeting Sīta and talking to her that Hanumān has received the embrace of the all-permeating Rāma. Thus, finally, it is the gracious favour of the Divine Mother that is the principal instrument in bringing about a complete and thorough knowledge of self and of the Supreme Self and a perfect attainment of God.

Great skill is needed in approaching God, who is the only means of attaining Him, through the good offices of the Divine Mother. To reach the conviction that Knowledge, Works and Devotion are not the means, and that He alone is the means of attaining Him, proves one's skill. To approach Him as the means through the Divine Mother shows acute skill. Śrī Rāmānuja, having this spiritual dexterity, first solicits the favour of the Divine Mother in his Śaraṇāgati gadya, before he seeks refuge in Śrī-mannārāyaṇa. The gōpikas recall to mind the order in which the stages are to be covered, and awaken in this Pāsuram the influencing mediator Nīlādēvi. In the next Pāsuram, they awaken Kṛṣṇa, who is the only reliable and effective instrument in attaining Kṛṣṇa; and after that, they arouse both Nīla and Kṛṣṇa, the mediator and the means together, for they form the ultimate objectives (Upēya) as well.

*Uudu madagaḷitna ṍḍāda tōḷ valiyan
 nandagōpālan marumagalē ! nappinnāy !
 kandaṁ kamaḷum kuḷali ! kaḍaitiṛavāy
 vandeṅṅum kōḷiyaḷaittanakāṇ, māḍavi
 ppandal mēḷ palkāl kuyilinaṅḡḷ kūvinakāṇ
 pandārvirali ! unmaittunan pērpāḍa
 ṣendāmarai kkaiyāl ṣirār vaḷaiyoḷippa
 vandutiṛavāy magiḷṇdu elō rempāvāy*

Summary.

Nanda has the strength of a tusker with dripping fat; he takes delight in fighting the elephants, of which he has a herd; and his might of arms knows no rebuff from the enemy! O you, daughter-in-law of Nandagōpa, arise. Nīlādēvi, radiant with tresses wafting

fragrance! Open the latch of the doors. The cocks have been crowing everywhere. The Kokils perching in groups on the lattice, which supports Mādhavi-creeper, have begun singing. Note, it is dawn. You who hold a ball in your hand! We tell you that we have come to glorify the qualities of our brother-in-law. Please wake up and walk to the threshold in joy and open the door, with the beautiful bracelets on your red-lotus hand making a loud jingling sound.

Commentary.

1. *Undu madagaḷittan oḍāda tōḷ valiyān nandagōpālan maru magaḷē nappinnāy*

“Nīlā Dēvi” (Nappinnāy), daughter-in-law of Nandagōpa whose might is that of a tusker with dripping fat and whose valiant arm knows no shrinking before an enemy!”

Nīlādēvi is called “Nappinnāy” in Tamil. She is the daughter of Kumbha and the daughter-in-law of Nanda. As she is a familiar companion of Kṛṣṇa from childhood, it has become usual for people to associate her more with Nanda’s relationship and call her ‘Nanda’s daughter-in-law,’ long before her wedding with Kṛṣṇa has taken place. Nīlādēvi herself loves to be thus addressed. A married woman feels honoured if she is accosted by her relationship with her father-in-law. That is why, while making herself known to Hanumān in the Aśōkavana in Lanka, Sīta proudly claims first that she is the daughter-in-law of that redoubtable Daśaratha, whose prowess has blasted the enemy ranks; and then only mentions that she is the daughter of Janaka, King of Viḍēha.

*Snuṣā Daśaratha syāham śatrusainya pratāpinaḥ
Duhitā Janakasyāham Vaidēhasya mahātmanaḥ*

Sīta thus thinks of herself, first and foremost, as Daśaratha’s daughter-in-law. Whatever be the wealth and status of her parental home, a woman only cherishes and values her connections with the family of her husband. So it gives Nīlādēvi great pleasure to be addressed thus: “the daughter-in-law of Nanda.” In the previous Pāsurams, references are made to ‘Nandagōpa’s mansion’ when the gōpikas assemble before it, to ‘Nandagōpa’s son’ when

they come in sight of Kṛṣṇa. Now they accost Nīlādēvi as 'Nandagōpa's daughter-in-law! This shows that when we think of the Mantra (Incantation) in which God resides, or think of God Himself, or think of Lakṣmi who as mediator helps us to attain Him, we must relate them all to the āchārya. Neither incantation, nor God, nor Lakṣmi will be of avail, if they are not related to the āchārya. Lakṣmi, who is the mediating influence, is also at the beck and call of the āchārya in the same way as God is. Life here, in bondage to birth-and-death, is like the parental home of a woman. The Heavenly Abode is like the house into which she steps after marriage. The liberated self is like a married woman. In the same way as a married woman cherishes relationship with her father-in-law's home, the liberated self ceases thinking of connections based on the physical body ("nōpajanam smaranidam śarīram"); and always cherishes his relationship with the Supreme. The address "daughter-in-law of Nandagōpa" signifies how the liberated selves conduct themselves.

In this Pāsuram, two attributes are ascribed to Nandagōpa. The first is the comparison with the mighty tusker dripping fat; and the second his undiminished strength of arms. The expression "Undu mada kalittan" yields three meanings: (a) His strength is like that of a huge tusker dripping fat. (b) His strength is such as to enable him to fight with mighty tuskers dripping fat; (c) He owns a herd of mighty tuskers dripping fat. Nowhere is it established that Nanda has fought with elephants nor that he has possessed the might of a huge tusker. But the gōpikas imagine that if Kṛṣṇa has been able to overcome Kuvalayāpīḍam, it is because of his being the son of Nanda. Nanda does not possess elephants at all. How then can he be said to have them? It is said in justification that Nanda and Vasudēva being bosom friends, Vasudēva's elephants are kept in Vrēpalle and they are taken to the forest along with the buffaloes of Nanda to feed. So Nanda may be said to have elephants too. The strength of Nanda's arms is such that it never shrinks even a bit when facing the enemy. That is why he is able to bring up Kṛṣṇa in close vicinity of Kamsa's capital. Nanda, no doubt, is a vassal of Kamsa. He obeys Kamsa so far as payment of tribute is concerned. If Kamsa extends his authority beyond asking for the tribute, Nanda can resist him; he can even kill him with his Vclāyudha (a cowherd's spear). And Kamsa is aware of this prowess of Nanda. That is why, even

after knowing that his enemy is being brought up in Nanda's village, Kamsa has neither invaded the place nor pressed Nanda to surrender Kṛṣṇa. He has only devised secret plots to get Kṛṣṇa killed; and ultimately brought death upon himself. Those who fear Kamsa take refuge in Nanda's place with a sense of relief and security. That is why Kṛṣṇa too has left Mathura for Vṛēpalle. There is an esoteric secret underlying this. Nandagōpa is the āchārya and Vṛēpalle is his hermitage. It alone can provide a shelter for a worldly person aspiring for spiritual life from the threat of Kamsa, the Ego.

The hearts of the gōpikas are filled to overflowing with only one emotion, love for Kṛṣṇa. Their only anxiety is about Kṛṣṇa's safety. His audacious exploits like killing demons like Pūtana and Śakaṭāsura provoke external foes. His mischievous pranks-stealing milk, fresh butter and curds-incite internal enemies. And the tender love-laden hearts of the gōpikas flutter with concern, for they apprehend trouble any moment. In this plight, what gives them comfort and assurance that no danger can visit Kṛṣṇa, is Nandagōpa's strong arm. Hence it is they refer to it in this Pāsuram. The sentient individual striving after spiritual life feels nerve-racking fear for his misdeeds and wicked conduct; he overcomes it, only after meditating upon such attributes of God as His omnipotence and His abounding grace, and gains fearlessness.

"Athasōbhayamgatō bhavati"

"na bibhēti kutaśchana"

"Having attained fearlessness, he fears nothing." The gōpikas have no fear of consequences for their misconduct or misdeeds. All their fear is for the safety of Kṛṣṇa whom they know to be audacious and mischievous. But they find reassuring comfort in Nanda's might. They praise the strength of Nanda's arms because they believe that Kṛṣṇa can muster the arm-might needed to overthrow Chāṇūra and Muṣṭika, only because he has inherited it from his father. In addressing Nila as the 'daughter-in-law of Nanda' the gōpikas indirectly tell her: "your father-in-law is so magnanimous as to give each whatever he needs. You, as befitting his daughter-in-law, should grant us our wish." Nīlādēvi does not answer, possibly because she thinks there is no particular

reference to her. After Kṛṣṇa's descent into Nandavraja, there is no gōpika that has not become the daughter-in-law of Nanda! So the gōpikas now address her by her name "Nappinna"; as they do so, their netherlips shiver betraying their impatience that she has not cared to come out, when so many of them wait at her door in anguish.

In praising Nandagōpa, they refer in this Pāsuram, to the might of his arms, to his possessing a herd of elephants and to his strength equalling that of a huge tusker dripping fat. He is addressed as Nāyaka (Leader) in Pāsuram XVI, as munificent benefactor in Pāsuram XVII, as a man of great might and prowess in this Pāsuram, and as a man of magnificent wealth in Pāsuram XXI. All these attributes are associated with an āchārya, whose place Nandagōpa fills here. The āchārya should have the power to lead his disciples. He should have the strength and prowess needed to remove the obstacles in the way of the progress of his disciples. Ignorance, attachment, hatred, egoism are the enemies, from whose contamination the disciple is to be guarded. The āchārya should also eliminate insidious enemies like the sense of self-independence, the idea of belonging to any other than God, the craving for any benefit other than God. To say that Nandagōpa possesses an elephant is not irrelevant. Lord Śrīkṛṣṇa is the mighty tusker dripping fat; and he is under Nanda's control. The Supreme is submissive to the āchārya. Let us look at the similarity of the Supreme to the elephant:—

1. Though the elephant is mighty, it submits to the control of the mahout and remains bound to a pillar. God, too, submits to His devotee and allows Himself to be bound to a wooden mortar!

2. In the same way as the elephant itself passes to the mahout the rope which is to bind it, the Supreme Self Himself bestows upon the aspirant the devotion which is needed to take Him captive.

3. The elephant bends its leg as an aid to the mahout to climb to its back. In the same way, the Supreme stretches His foot as an aid to the devotees to reach Him.

4. In obedience to the mahout's wish, the elephant takes on its back any other person as well. Likewise, the Supreme allows any one who has received the favour of an āchārya to attain Him.

5. Even after a clean bath, the elephant sprinkles dirt upon itself. Likewise, the Supreme, who has been glorified by the sacred scriptures, allows Himself to be contaminated with the faint praise of sinful men.

6. Though the elephant possesses a huge and strong body, it submits to the thrust of the small sharp goad; likewise, the Supreme yields to the piercing incision of devotion which takes the form of a subtle spark of knowledge.

Again, the elephant may be compared to the strong ego. Nandagōpa, the āchārya, has proved a victor over the mighty tusker of ego. Desire and anger (Kāma, Krōdha) are the enemies blocking the way to God-realisation; and the āchārya proves his prowess in eradicating them. Such an āchārya is to be found in Nandagōpa. Nīlādēvi is the beloved of the lord who is Himself amenable to Nanda's control. The gracious favour of the Divine Mother, who is the influencing mediator, will become available only to those who have won the goodwill of the āchārya. The path to God lies through the āchārya and then through the Divine Mother.

2. *Kandam kamaḷum kuḷalī kaḍai tṛavāy*

“Girl with braided tresses breathing out fragrance, Lift the latch.”

If God is a flower, the Divine Mother is its fragrance. When the whiff of that fragrance is felt outside, it is clear that the Lord is within in the company of ‘Śrī.’ This fragrance is a composite of the odours of all the various flowers piled up in a mass; and its emergence indicates union with the Supreme. He is the possessor of all sweet odours and all delicious essences: “Sarva gandhaḥ, sarvarasaḥ.” Because of her association with the Supreme, she has acquired such fragrance. The converse also is true. Because of the fragrance of her plaited tresses, the Supreme has fallen under her spell. The attraction of Lakṣmī lies in her excessive devotion to the Lord. The Divine Mother presses into service her beautiful fragrance-laden tresses to soften the Supreme, who is intolerant of the sins of sentient creatures, into bestowing His mercy on them. While awakening Nīlādēvi, the gōpikas particularly mention the qualities which make her competent as an influencing-mediator—(1) her gracious considerateness and liberal generosity,

derived from her relationship with Nanda, (2) her close, inseparable association with Kṛṣṇa (3) her attractive beauty which can draw Kṛṣṇa under her spell. Mahālakṣmi who alone has these qualities can make a competent mediator. The gōpikas entreat Nīlādēvi to lift the latch and open the doors.

The gōpikas have taken a vow that they will not bedeck themselves with flowers during the period of the ritual, which is to last a month. While they have been keeping their word, it is wrong on the part of Nīlādēvi to have worn the flowers. To point out her lapse to her, they accost her as "the girl with tresses breathing out fragrance." Or again, they ask her; "Granting that you have worn the flowers already enjoyed by Him, is it not your duty to see that we are brought into His presence, so that we too may share your good fortune? Can you relish pleasures when your children are away? Instead of monopolising the enjoyment of the stream of fragrance emanating out of the experience of God, it is up to you to overcome the delusion of selfishness and to open the doors and direct that stream on to us. Pray, have some consideration for us."

The entire dependence of individual selves on their works, (Karmaparatantrata), and the absolute strictness of God, are the two obstacles to the attainment of God. The bondage to works can be severed only by God's grace. And God judges us by our works, strictly applying the standards prescribed by the scriptures, and dispenses rewards and punishments. But the Divine Mother veils from the Supreme the sins committed by those on whom she casts her gracious looks. By drawing Him under the spell of her beauty and blandishments, she mitigates His strictness and influences Him towards showing mercy to them. Our own past works which prevent our reaching Him, and His intention to regulate results strictly on the basis of our works, are the two doors which bar our admission to His presence. We cannot by ourselves eliminate our sins. The doors open when the latch is lifted by the favour of the Divine Mother, after mollifying God and influencing Him not to judge the aspirants strictly on the basis of their works but to save them generously by the measure of His mercy. Lest Nīlādēvi should entertain any doubt about the time of night and the propriety of opening the door, the gōpikas tell her that it is

daybreak and advance some proofs of it in support. That they have reached a state of purity, needed to win the Divine Mother's favour, is shown by their attentive and constant hearing of sacred texts and hoary conventions. Unless this discipline of reverent hearing is gone through, ignorance is not removed, purity is not established, and fitness for spiritual experience is not attained. The breaking of day signifies that that fitness has been reached.

3. *Vandēṅṁ kōḷi yaḷaittanākāṇ*

"The cocks have begun crowing everywhere."

"It is not a stray cock crowing somewhere. When cocks crow from all sides, it is clear that it is dawn approaching. In our agonising eagerness to have the bath we have risen from beds long before the cocks have begun crowing. Union with Kṛṣṇa prevents you from getting up even now. True; but should you not rise at least out of pity for us?" Those who are referred to as cocks here are the great devotees with an abiding fervour in serving Him. They are the householders who cleanse their minds with the regular performance of prescribed duties, who using their powers of discrimination accept worthwhile things and reject others, and who with their abiding faith in spiritual experience freely impart what they know to others. They are the great saints. A cock makes a thorough search for a grain of food in a heap of rubbish; even if it finds in it a precious gem, which is more valuable than food, it merely brushes it aside with its beak. In the same way, the saints live among us and amidst sense-enjoyments but have little interest in stale objects; they will accept for food the one, and the only one, subject of God. And while they are engaged on this search, they may get at precious gems, wealth and plenty of foodgrains, which are deemed more valuable in the eyes of the world than God-consciousness; but they have the strength of will to reject them as mere trash. The cocks wake up a little before dawn and awaken others with their crowing. Likewise, the devotees also communicate to others by their discourses the spiritual experiences they have gained during the flourishes of *sattvaguṇa* in them. The cocks, again, are domestic birds. Among devotees there are house-holders who with their spiritual experience dedicate themselves to the service of God as *ācāryas*. Hearing discourses which propagate devotion and expound other spiritual subjects, is here mentioned as a symbol

of dawn. Nīlādēvi still remains silent, possibly thinking that the cocks are crowing not because it is dawn but because they are disturbed from sleep by the commotion of the gōpikas. The gōpikas mention one more activity as proof of daybreak.

4. *Mādavippandal mēlpalkāl kuyilinaṅgaḷ kūvinākāṇ*

“Perched on the lattice supporting Madhavi creeper, groups of Kōkils have been frequently singing.”

If a single kōkil sings, it may be presumed that it must have risen sometime during the night and indulged in it. But when so many birds sing in groups, and that too frequently, there can be no doubt that it is dawn. In the same way as the gōpikas who are assembled under the canopy of the creeper, sing to awaken Nīla, the birds which are perched on the creeper cry hoarse, languishing for sustenance. To the gōpikas Nīla's words are sustenance; and she chooses to remain silent! According to the convention in Sanskrit poetry, Kōkils are described as singing in the season of spring only. In describing them as singing in winter, there is a great significance, viewed as an art of suggestion. These Kōkils are the Āḷwārs who fill the world with bliss by their sweet melodies. They have attained knowledge and devotion entirely by the grace of God and not at all by self-effort. The Kōkils are brought up by other birds parabhṛtās). The Āḷwārs also are brought up by others. The Kōkil cannot hatch its egg itself; it is the crow that does it. The Āḷwārs also are unable by their own efforts to remove the veil of ignorance, which envelops their souls. They can have it removed only by the grace of God. They are ‘parabhṛtas’, in as much as they are bred and nourished by “Paramātmā”, God Himself.

The Kōkils eat the tender buds of a mango-tree; and, with throats rendered sharply bitter, sing their sweet notes. The Supreme is the Absolute essence in all phenomena (Rasa swarūpa); and His expression is quintessential bliss; and He is the fruit of the mango-tree, which is the Vēdic scripture. The tender buds of this Vēdic mango-tree are the Upaniṣads. The Āḷwārs have assimilated these tender buds; and acquiring sweetness of tone burst spontaneously into song, giving utterance to the Upaniṣadic truths. The Kōkil's melody strikes the panchama swara, the fifth note; and the song of the Āḷwārs brings out the fifth Vēda (Panchama Vēda).

The Kōkil and the crow do not differ in their colour. The difference is in their tone and expression. In external appearance, the Ālwārs are not different from the worldly men who are absorbed in mean pursuits. They appear different from the crow-like mortals, when they lose themselves in the joy of the spring of love, which emerges from spiritual experience. The cocks remain in human dwellings and announce the timings by their cries. The āchāryas are like the cocks. While attending to duties promptly and cultivating devotion sedulously, the āchāryas try to inculcate devotion in others by their periodical discourses and expositions on scriptural subjects and spiritual incantations. The Ālwārs are the Kōkils. Receiving knowledge as a gift of God, and filled with love born of spiritual experience, the Ālwārs lose themselves in spontaneous song. The Kōkils have perched on the lattice supporting the creeper *mādhavi*: they are in groups and they are singing time and again. The Divine Mother is the creeper *mādhavi*. Possessing the triple Faith (1) of taking refuge in Him and in no other (2) of being enjoyed by Him and by no other (3) of belonging to Him and to no other, Lakṣmī gives herself up entirely to Him. So she is compared to a *mādhavi* creeper and Nārāyaṇa to whom she clings to the lattice-support. The Kōkils represent the Ālwārs who adhere to this God-phenomenon, Nārāyaṇa, as their support. The Ālwārs, like the Kōkils again, wish to be in company with other devotees of God. Their nature is to sing continually to the glorification of God. That is why the *gōpikas* here say that groups of Kōkils, perched on the lattice which is supporting the *mādhavi*-creeper, have been singing time and again. Thus the preceptors and saints of the past are here presented respectively as cocks and kōkils. The divine sayings of the former and the rapturous songs of the latter are presented as symbols of dawn, beckoning the aspirants to arise. Receiving no response from Nīlādēvi, the *gōpikas* peep through the key-hole to see how she is. She is seen to be holding a ball in one of her hands. Finding that she has not taken cognizance of their anguish in her preoccupation of holding Kṛṣṇa with one hand and a ball with the other, they hasten to address her in a different way:

5. *Pandār virali*:

*Lady whose fingers are fully engaged in holding the ball!

“ Could it be that you fail to respond because you are full of bliss? Nīlādēvi is in a state of complete self-forgetfulness—with the happiness of union with Kṛṣṇa coupled with the pleasure of sport with the ball. Having played with Kṛṣṇa with the ball in the night, she goes to sleep holding the ball in her hand. Kṛṣṇa is the instrument of her enjoyment and the ball is the implement of her sport. For the diversion of His beloved, the Supreme Lord makes, at the time of creation, an insentient ball which is bound with the thread of Karma and fills it with sentient creatures as breath. And this is the Divine couple’s sport and amusement. At the time of dissolution, the Divine Mother collects the ball and holding it in one hand sleeps, embracing the Lord with the other. The ball is the whole universe of sentient and insentient creatures. The Divine Mother holds the whole world and the Supreme Lord in her hands—the world which forms her splendour in one hand; and the Supreme who is the possessor of the splendour, in the other. The word “Nāramulu” means “all perennial objects” and they constitute the ball. She holds them in one hand. The word ‘Ayana’ means ‘support’; the Support of all objects is the Supreme Self. She holds Him with the other hand. ‘Śrī-tattva’ is the power that brings them together. ‘Nārāyaṇatattva’ is the state of their union. She has the privilege of holding with one hand the possessor and Lord of the whole universe, and in the other, all His possessions, all the worlds. She holds with one hand the Supreme, to be enjoyed by whom is her only objective; and she holds in the other hand the universe, which forms the venue for such enjoyment. The gōpikas request that, in the same way as she has done with the insentient ball, she may touch them and hold them in her hand; and establish through her effort their contact with the Supreme Lord. They wish and pray that Nīlādēvi will vouchsafe to them the same privilege that she has enjoyed, of sleeping with Lord Kṛṣṇa holding the ball in hand. They then explain their object in going there.

6. *Un maittunan pēr pāḍa:*

“ We have come here to sing the name of your ‘bāva,’ (the son of your father’s sister).

“ When storms in a tea-cup rage while you and your lover are engaged in love-sport or amusements, we take your side and

sing of your victories and of your lover's defeats; when you turn away, each from the other, in your tiffs, we undertake to negotiate, carrying messages from one to the other, and sing about your lover's exploits. If we glorify him and his qualities, it is only because of his relationship with you. It is on account of this relationship with you, we come here to reach him. He is "Śrīmannārāyaṇa"—Only when your name Śrī is kept to the fore, He receives completeness. Nārāyaṇatattva, the Phenomenon of the Absolute, becomes approachable and attainable only through 'Śrītattva,' the agency of the influencing-mediator. In the same way as the inhabitants of Mithila adore Śrī Rāma because of his relationship with Sīta, the gōpikas adore Kṛṣṇa because of his kinship with Nīlādevi. Hence they say that they sing the glories of Nīla's 'bāva.'

7. *Śendāmaraiikkaiyāl śirār valai vōlippa vandu
tiṟavāy magiṇḍu ēḷḍempavāy*

"Come, and with that hand of yours which resembles a red-lotus flower, open the door with pleasure, to the jingling sound of your beautiful bangles."

Nīlādevi tells them to open the door and enter. But the gōpikas reply; "We are not the persons to open the door ourselves. You alone must open and let us in." Lord Kṛṣṇa concludes his discourse on the Gīta with the Śloka: "Sarva dharmān parityajya," with the assurance that he will himself free Arjuna from his sins and therefore tells him not to give way to grief. ("māśucha.") The gōpikas hesitate to pluck courage from this assurance of protection; and so they solicit the favour of the Divine Mother. The individual selves need not feel dejected for their sins when they cling to the Lord-of-all as the only means of reaching Him. Still, a lurking fear haunts them. As the Lord is ever independent, there is no knowing what He will do. The Mother offers protection, reassuring us that such fear is unwarranted. The rākṣasa women, who persecute Sīta during her captivity in Āśokavana in Lanka, hear the details of Trijaṭa's dream and feel terrified as to how severely the victorious Rāma will punish them. But Sīta gives them assurance: "Bhavēyam śaraṇam hi vaḥ: Though Śrī Rāma is fully free to act as he pleases, I shall intercede for your protection and see that his ire is not directed against you." The gōpikas believe that their protection lies in Nīlādevi, whose

arm has the power to restrict the freedom of their Lord. So they plead that she should open the door with her hand.

The Divine Mother's tender hand has turned red because of its constant exertions in the protection of the world; and so it is like the red-lotus flower. She has held the ball so long in her palm; and hence it has become red. With such a delicate hand, she is to open the door in such a way that the bangles make a loud jingling sound. She should not draw her bangles back while opening the door. She should not open the door from the couch making use of some device. She has to get up and walk to the door to open it, so that the gōpikas may have an opportunity to see the beauty of her gait and enjoy it. And when she opens the door she should not think that she is doing it for the benefit of the gōpikas. She must feel happy that she is opening the door for her own good and pleasure. This attitude is the very acme of perfect, gracious love that is seen in the āchāryas and in the Divine Mother. The gōpikas wish that they too should wear the bangles and enjoy His company without break in the same way as he has done. They seem to demand a particular attitude and code of behaviour from her. "You should not open the door as though you are doing it out of charity, nor should you open it in a huff, exhibiting laziness, indifference or annoyance, as though you are pressed to do it for our sake. For your own happiness, you should rise from the couch and gladly walk up to the door and open it to the accompaniment of the jingling sound of your beautiful bangles and bracelets. Our eyes, famished for beauty so long, should now feel happy by feasting on your gait. Our ears, long hungering for music, should now find bliss in the melody produced by the movement of your bangles. The fasting of our palates should cease, now that they have an opportunity to sing at close quarter the praises of your lover. Our sensation of touch so long deadened, will now feel revived and refreshed when our bodies which cling to the door experience, by transmission, your touch of it, as you lift the latch. Our noses which by long disuse have lost their capacity to smell, now feel resuscitated with breathing the fragrance wafted from your tresses." Thus a glimpse of the Divine Mother drenches all the senses in overflowing bliss and aids the attainment of poise. This in its turn provides peace to the mind. The essential thing to do to attain bliss is to solicit the favour of the Divine Mother. She will help

the aspirant as the influencing mediator, by directing towards him the flow of knowledge that removes all obstacles to his attainment of God. That knowledge is the hand; and the bangles worn on the hand reflect the eternal awareness of intimate kinship with Him. That she belongs to him and to no other, that she takes refuge in Him and in no other, that she is to be enjoyed by Him and by no other—these aspects of kinship are symbolised by the bangles on her hand. Only such a hand can open the door of ignorance that has been all along barring admission to God. Bangles usually reflect the relationship that a woman has with man; and here too they reflect the close connection of the Divine Mother with the Lord in the three aspects outlined above.

By instituting a comparison between her hand and the red-lotus flower, the three characteristics that knowledge should possess are indicated. The Lotus flower has (1) beauty (2) delicateness (3) fragrance. Saundaryam consists in Viṣayanivṛtti. What gives beauty to knowledge is freedom from all objects except God. When we see an object of beauty, we keep our eyes fixed on it, being disinclined to look at any other thing. Likewise, when knowledge is directed only towards the subject of God, leaving out the rest, it becomes beautiful. The state in which one is disinclined to look after oneself, the state of complete self-abnegation, is what constitutes 'delicateness.' Saukumāryam lies in Swabhōkṛtva nivṛtti. Knowledge reaches this state of delicateness, when, while enjoying God, the thought never occurs that joy is being experienced for one's own sake. Saugandhyam emanates from niratiśaya prēmātmakam. When the fragrance becomes very strong all other smells get sunk in it. Knowledge becomes fragrant only when selfless love interfuses every thought and action and thus consecrates them. Spiritual knowledge grows by stages. First, there is the detachment from all objects other than God; second, there is the growth of a positive love of God, and a lively consciousness that that love is not for selfish ends but to please Him only; and finally the stage is reached when the aspirant loses himself in His delight. Love of God manifests itself in consecrated services to God. Just as fragrance spreads to all sides, this love of God makes itself felt in all kinds of consecrated services, rendered at all times and in all places and in all states of being. Knowledge acquires fragrance when services are rendered, only because love of God makes it impossible not to render them. It is Śrīdevi.

who bestows such knowledge and removes the obstacles to it. She gives us knowledge of the self, knowledge about the means of attaining Him and knowledge about the highest end worthy of pursuit. She removes the obstacles in the way, such as the spirit of independence, the feeling that salvation lies in self-effort and the habit of dedicating all activities to some other than God. These are the doors which close barring admission into God's presence; and Śrī alone can open them.

This Pāsuram in which the gōpikas pray Nīlādevi to open the door is Śrī Rāmānuja's favourite hymn. He is in the habit of reciting daily all the thirty pāsurams as they propound the essential message of the Upaniṣads. Hence it is that he is called "Tiruppāvai Jiyar," the saint who is fond of reciting Tiruppāvai. It seems that as Śrī Rāmānuja goes from door to door seeking food, he sings Tiruppāvai with all his mind concentrated on it. He happens to be reciting this Pāsuram on one occasion as he comes and stands at the house of his preceptor, Śrī Mahāpūrṇa. The daughter of his preceptor, Śrī Attulāyamma, comes out with food, opening the door. When he sees this lady, Śrī Rāmānuja feels as though Nīlādevi herself has come to the door and with her bangles jingling lifted the latch and opened it. And he falls into a swoon excited with the ecstasy of the vision. How remarkable is his power of concentrated imagination! It is believed that if this Pāsuram is recited with similar identification in spirit, the Divine Mother is sure to give us a glimpse of Herself in a vision beatific.



PĀŚURAM XIX

PREFACE.

The gōpikas now awaken Śrīkṛṣṇa and Nīlādēvi together. Lakṣmidēvi is the influencing-negotiator; Nīlādēvi is a part and parcel of Lakṣmi. The gōpikas' effort to wake up Nīlādēvi signifies their soliciting the favour of the mediator. A mediator can be approached directly. So there is no need to seek the help of any body else to reach Lakṣmi. But when we seek the gracious favour of the Supreme, we have to make the approach only by winning the goodwill of the Divine Mother. After soliciting the favour of both, we have to adore them as equals. Lakṣmi is the mediating influence; and Nārāyaṇa is the effective instrument or means to attain Him. But when adoring them, the individual selves should dedicate all their activities as services to both of them. That is why the gōpikas awaken Nīlādēvi first; and then in this Pāśuram both Nīla and Kṛṣṇa together.

When the aspirant approaches the Supreme through the Mother, His mercy surges and flows towards him. Nīlādēvi wishes to respond to the prayers of the gōpikas, and attempts to rise in order to open the door. But Kṛṣṇa who shows great consideration to those related to her, draws Nīla back, wishing to open the door himself. Having pulled her back, he throws her on the couch and presses her down in a tight embrace. He forgets himself in the happiness of her touch and the door remains unopened. The gōpikas pray that Kṛṣṇa may wake up and open the door. Hearing their piteous cry, Kṛṣṇa tries to rise in order to open the door; but Nīlādēvi with her expressive eyes restrains him from doing so. The gōpikas then plead with Nīlādēvi that what she is doing is quite unfair to them. This pāśuram appears to be full of Sṅgāraraṣa, passionate love. A picture of the lovers indulging in warm embraces and reciprocal hugs may be revolting to the sense of propriety and decency. But strictly speaking, what is presented here is not passion but philosophy, the close coherence of the Supreme and His will (sankalpa) to protect.

Both before and after creation, the Supreme Lord will be in company with His consort Lakṣmi. The principle underlying the phenomenon of Śrīmannārāyaṇa is the existence of an Indivisible One, manifesting as Many. Śrīdēvi herself is the merciful will (sankalpa) of the Lord. And this Sankalpa is the cause of the creation and of the maintenance and dissolution of the world. But the will is not different from the Supreme. It is the Supreme, who exercises the will, ordering creation and maintenance and dissolution of the world. Then who is responsible for the protection of the world? Is it Śrī or Nārāyaṇa or Śrīmannārāyaṇa? It is Nārāyaṇa that protects and not Śrī. Yet it is not Nārāyaṇa alone. It is Nārāyaṇa coupled with Śrī that provides the protection. Śrī is the dharma that makes Him protector; because it is Lakṣmi, who is no other than His merciful will to protect, that makes Him protector. God, divested of His will to protect, is no Protector at all. When there is no need for protection, 'Śrī,' who represents His will to protect, nestles in the bosom of the Lord. When the need to protect arises, Śrī the embodiment of mercy, surges forth. And this mercy impinges on the immortals and claims them as her own; and the Supreme gives them protection.

It is this situation that is described in an ingenious and cunning manner in this pāsuram. The state of God's will taking shape as Mercy is Nilādēvi. She rises and accepts the gōpikas as her own, as people worthy of protection. With her acceptance of them, their protection has become a responsibility of the Supreme. The various situations that are presented, which smack of passionate love, elucidate the relationships between the Śrītattva and Nārāyaṇa-tattva, which are inherent in Śrīmannārāyaṇa tattva. The whole world, sentient and insentient, belongs entirely to Śrīmannārāyaṇa. Every individual self in the world is assigned by God the work that he can do. The activities undertaken by individual selves redound only to the glory of God. The world, which has no independent status and which is like His body, belongs to Him in every way. The world is thus the property of God; and Śrīmannārāyaṇa is the possessor of the world. No distinction should be drawn as between Śrī and Nārāyaṇa and the couple should be regarded as the possessor of the world. That is why the gōpikas rouse both of them together in this Pāsuram.

Our adoration and service, our songs of praise, should be intended for both of them together, and not separately for each. That is why Lakṣmaṇa declares: "Bhavāṃstu sahavai dēvyā girisānuṣu ramsyatē, aham sarvam kariṣyāmi: O Rāma! Have a stroll with Sītā alongside the mountains. I shall render you all services." It is to be understood that those who attempt to serve either of them separately come to grief like Sūrpaṇakha and Rāvaṇa.

*Kuttuvilakkeriya kkōṭṭukkāl kaṭṭimēl
mettenṇa pañcaśayanattin mēlēṇi
kottalar pūnguḷal nappinnai koṇgaimēl
vaittukkiḍanda malar mārḇā! vāytirāvāy
maittadaṇṇaṇṇināy! niyunmaṇālanai
ettanaipōdum tuyileḷa voṭṭāykāṇ
ettanaiyēlum pirivāttagillāyāl
tattuva manṇu ttagavēlōrempāvāy*

Summary.

On a bed, distinguished for its comforts of height and width, coolness, whiteness and softness, spread on a cot with ivory leg-supports, and surrounded by clusters of wicks burning bright, lies Nīlādēvi with bunches of blooming flowers decorating plaits of her tresses; and close to her sleeps, Kṛṣṇa with his broad bosom pressing her breasts. O Kṛṣṇa! Won't you open your mouth and speak! O Nīlādēvi! how impressive are your large eyes decorated with collyrium! How long will you prevent your lover from rising? Not to endure separation from him, even for a while, is inconsistent with your nature and your characteristic tendency!

Commentary.

1. *Kuttu vilakkeriyakkōṭṭukkāl kaṭṭil mēl:*

On a cot beautified by ivory leg-stands lie the couple, Kṛṣṇa and Nīlādēvi. Clusters of burning wicks surround the bed. Placed beside the head of the bed is a high stand topped with a basin holding five wicks in five directions. This stand can be moved to any place according to need. Only with the permission of the elders can the gōpikas meet Kṛṣṇa. But Nīlādēvi is under no obligation

to obtain their consent. She suffers from no restrictions. She need not take recourse to meeting him only in darkness; she need not fear the approach of dawn. She has the great good fortune of enjoying Kṛṣṇa, looking on him in the bright light of the wicks, free from care and fear. But so far as the gōpikas are concerned, moonlight and lamplight alike are enemies; darkness alone is their friend, rendering them cover to meet Kṛṣṇa. The gōpikas feel that they should be with Kṛṣṇa and Nīla if only to render them services, such as shifting the stand of wicks to suit their comfort. So they appeal to them to admit them into their presence. "It is your nature to bestow on us equality with yourselves. You have gem-studded mansions; and you take pleasure in giving us similar homes. O Nīla! It is only when we, too, like you, lie on beds similar to yours, and enjoy the company of Kṛṣṇa in bright light as you do, that you can have real joy. How can you relish your experience, while we languish in misery? Our happiness lies in being in your presence while you enjoy each other's company." Lakṣmaṇa accompanies Rāma and Sīta into the woods, and renders all services, while the couple have a happy stroll. Vālmīki says: "Ramamāṇā vanē trayah." "All the *three* have a happy time in the woods." But Lakṣmaṇa is occupied with doing service to them. How then is he happy? In rendering services to the couple, Lakṣmaṇa gets as much happiness as Rāma and Sīta get from each other's company. Thus all the three are happy. While Kṛṣṇa and Nīlādēvi feel happy in each other's company, the gōpikas pray that they be given the privilege of serving them, so that they may derive happiness from it.

They further make a distinction between "this burning wick" which is giving light and another which is not. Can there be a burning wick which does not give light? It is the duty of a wick to yield light. But what is meant here is that the burning wick in the room makes other things visible and also makes itself visible. But there is the other lamp which does not show itself and which depends upon another for its becoming visible. The Lord is that lamp. It is Lakṣmi who makes the Lord visible. That is why she is called "mangala dīpa rekhām, auspicious ray of light." No light is needed to make Lakṣmi visible. She shines by herself like the lightning and makes the Lord visible and bright. Nīlādēvi, on the other hand, does not appear herself before them nor does she make Kṛṣṇa visible to them. The gōpikas therefore feel jealous

of her; and to suggest that the burning wick is better than her they begin praising it. Lord Kṛṣṇa also is, no doubt, an auspicious light that has emerged in the gōpa community. (Gōpavamśa samudbhūta mangala dīpa). But he is invisible; he does not by himself appear before others. He depends upon others to become visible. He becomes visible, only if Nīlādēvi makes him visible. That means, that Śrītattva acts as mediator in helping the aspirant to attain the Supreme. The gōpikas taunt Nīlādēvi for making herself unavailable to them and for spending a happy time in Kṛṣṇa's company.

The five burning wicks on the lamp-stand together represent the Knowledge that makes clear the phenomenon of Śrīmannārāyaṇa. Light is the scriptural authority which gives knowledge. God has given us authorities which, like light, chase away darkness and enable us to distinguish "what is" from "what is not." Among these authorities the Vēda holds the pride of place. And with its five accessories (upabṛumhaṇās) Srutis, Smṛtis, Itihāsas, Purāṇas and Āgamas, it provides five different authorities which promote wisdom. These five authorities are represented by the five burning wicks of the lamp-stand. The knowledge derived from them helps to unfold "Śrītattva and Nārāyaṇatattva"

The cot on which Nīla and Kṛṣṇa rest has been fitted with ivory leg-supports. Kṛṣṇa engages in fight Kamsa's elephant, Kuvalayāpīḍam, while the young women of Mathura watch, with anxiety writ large on their faces. He kills it, his tusks extracted, and orders that they may be made into leg-supports for Nīlādēvi's bedstead. He has killed the elephant for her sake. As she is the wife of a warrior, she does not feel contented with presents other than those earned by valour. A warrior's wife longs for the embrace of her husband's body, which is deeply scarred by the shafts of the enemy. A warrior's wife finds no joy in her husband's embrace, unless his body shows hardened scars where the enemy's arrows have struck, and unless his hands exhibit encrusted spots where the bow-string has often lashed. Embracing a body not having these marks of valour is, for a warrior's wife, like embracing one of the companions of her own sex. That is why Sīta feels ecstatic when she warmly embraces Śrī Rāma on his victorious return, after killing in battle Khara, Dūṣaṇa,

Triśira and their army of fourteen thousand warriors. Again a warrior's wife is like a "*prapanna*." A "*prapanna*" is one who surrenders, without any reservation, to God as the only Saviour; he leaves the entire burden of protecting him to God. As he has the firm conviction that God is All-in-all for him, he fears nothing; he entertains no fear at all. When Sita walks in the woods, she fears no danger from elephant, lion or tiger, for the simple reason that she has sought shelter in Rāma's arms. Bāhū Rāmasya samśritā. Sita tells Rāvaṇa that having so long been accustomed to sleep with the shoulder of Śrī Rāma (the lord of the world) for a pillow, she can never think of an alternative support or rest. Thus to those who have sought refuge in the Supreme, nothing else in the world becomes acceptable. They consider His strength as their own. They fear nothing, as nothing can be hostile to them; there is nothing that dare challenge His strength. Why need they fear at all? His strength is never imperfect. So warriors' wives and suppliants of grace are never afraid of anything in the world. Śrī Kṛṣṇa has had to yoke seven defiant bulls together to win Nīlādēvi; and it is to please such a warrior's wife that he has killed Kuvalayāpīḍam and used its tusks for the leg-supports of her cot. Feeling jealous of Nīla, the gōpikas taunt her that while they are obliged to wait in woods or sand-dunes or arbours to meet Kṛṣṇa, she merrily enjoys his company on a soft bed spread over a high cot. They wonder how she manages to find joy in it when they are not present. When the liberated souls reach the Heavenly Abode, they see before them, Nārāyaṇa seated with Śrīdēvi on a couch. As the liberated self approaches, Nārāyaṇa gives him the support of His foot, lifts him up and takes him into His lap. Then He questions the self as to who he is, and the latter replies that he has become Brahma: Aham Brahmāsmi. Such a state of complete identification the self can experience, only when the Supreme, seated on the couch, takes him on His lap. The bed on which Nīla and Kṛṣṇa rest is similar to that couch; and this also is the place where the gōpikas reaching from without, can enjoy divine bliss. This is mentioned in "*Par-yanka Vidya*" (the Mystery of reaching the Lord's lap).

The leg-supports of the cot on which Nīla and Kṛṣṇa rest are made of the tusks of Kuvalayāpīḍam after it is killed. Kuvalayāpīḍam is the Ego. The elimination of the ego can be noticed in four ways: 1. in doing things 2. in enjoying things 3. in

knowing things and 4. in claiming things. And these four are the ivory leg-supports of the cot. The individual self seeking liberation should give up his egotism. He must think that he is not doing things by himself but the Supreme is getting things done by him. He must consider that the bliss emanating from spiritual experience is enjoyed not for his own sake but only for the bloom it brings to His countenance. He should not think that he has acquired knowledge. Rather, he must feel that God has graciously vouchsafed knowledge to him. He should not claim that he belongs to God. Instead, he should think that God has been pleased to accept his activities and to making use of him, and that he is but an implement in His hands and is used for His own glory. The activities of doing, enjoying, knowing and claiming from which all egoism is eliminated, form the four ivory leg-supports of the bedstead. Knowledge of the phenomenon of Śrīmannārāyaṇa is the burning wick. By its light is observed the state of total absence of egoism, which is signified by the four ivory leg-supports. It is the couch supported by egolessness that forms the seat of the Phenomenon of Śrīmannārāyaṇa.

The burning wick is the knowledge gathered from the accepted authorities; and it is composed of five strands. These five authorities advance several propositions which admit of four different meanings; and these are symbolised in the four ivory leg-supports. Some of them are listed below:

1. Bodies (Dēhas) .. (Dēva) Celestial beings, (manuṣya) human beings, (tiryak) lower forms of living creatures (animals, birds, insects etc.) and (sthāvara) immobile things (plants, mountains).
2. Castes (Varṇās) .. Brāhmins (scholars) Kṣatriyas (warriors) Vaisyas (peasants and businessmen) and Śūdras (labourers).
3. Stages of life (Āśramās)

Brahmacharya:	Student.
Gārhastya:	Householder.
Vānaprastha:	Anchorite.
Sanyāsa:	Wandering mendicant.

4. Devotees of God (Bhagavad bhajana śiluru) (Ārta) Seekers of God in agony or anguish for recovery of lost possessions; (Jijñāsu) Seekers of Knowledge; (Arthārthi) seekers of more wealth; (Jñāni) sages.
5. Worthy ends to pursue: (Puruṣārthas) Dharma; Righteousness; Artha; Wealth; Kāma: Sex-Desire; Mokṣa; Liberation.
6. States of Liberation: (Mokṣa) Sārūpya Similarity in form; Sālōkya: Identity of region; Sāmīpya: Nearness to God; Sāyujya: Merging into God.
7. Means of Liberation: (Mōkṣa Sādhana) Karma (Works), Jñāna (Knowledge), Bhakti (Devotion), Prapatti (Surrender).
8. Paths taken by the Soul after death of the body. (Marapāntara gatis) Yāmyagati, garbhagati, dhūmādigati, archirādigati
9. Epochs of time: (Yugas) Kṛta, Trēta, Dwāpara and Kali.
10. Dominant principles and tendencies prevalent in the Epochs: (Yugadharma) Dhyāna (Contemplation); Yajña (Sacrificial rites); Archana (Ritual of worship); Sankīrtana (Singing devotional hymns);
11. (Vyūhas) (Quiescent Modes of Divine Existence) Vāsudēva, Sankarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, Aniruddha.
12. Acts of God: (Bhagavat Kṛyas) Creation (Sṛṣṭhi); Maintenance (Sthiti); Dissolution (Samhāra); Liberation (mokṣa pratatva).

The fourfold aspects of certain principles established and maintained by Scriptures are the leg-stands that support the bed, on which the Lord and His consort rest. A couch banishes all worldly fatigues and provides rest and relaxation. The Couch of the Divine Couple represents the bliss of God-experience. It

eliminates all the sorrows of earthly existence and provides eternal bliss. After the state of freedom from ego is reached through the knowledge born of the assimilation of authoritative scriptures, the aspirant enjoys God-experience and becomes a fit couch for Kṛṣṇa and Nīla to rest.

2. *Mettenṛa pañca śayanattin mēlēri:*

Getting up to a bed of soft cotton, distinguished by the five qualities that make for comfort, Kṛṣṇa and Nīla lie nestled close to each other. The gōpikas in their jealousy taunt Nīla: "While we stand outside in anguish, how can you have the heart to sleep on a soft bed? Can any mother command sound sleep while her children cry in agony? A bed that is not invaded by children will be hard and hot for a mother; only when it gets shrivelled up by the children scrambling on it that it becomes soft and cool. How then could you find comfort on it? Should you not find your soft bed unendurably uncomfortable, till similar beds are secured for us? Again, is not this couch the one that is used by the Supreme when He stretches His leg to help lift the liberated soul to it? Is it proper that such a couch should be occupied exclusively by yourself and Kṛṣṇa?" Thus by their observations the gōpikas try to bring home to Nīladēvi her impropriety.

A bed should have five characteristics to be comfortable.

1. Coolness in summer and warmth in winter
 2. Fragrance
 3. Whiteness
 4. Softness
 5. Spaciousness.
- The bed occupied by Kṛṣṇa and Nīla answers to this description. The essence of the knowledge to be distilled from the study of different Śāstras and scriptures is "Arthapanchaka jñāna": This is what is propounded by all Śāstras; and this is the soft bed.

*Prāpyasya Brahmanōrūpam, prāptiścha pratyagātmanaḥ
Prāptyupāyam phalam prāptēḥ tathapraṁpti virōdhicha
Vadanti sakalā vēdāḥ sētiḥāsapurāṇakāḥ
Mumayaścha mahātmānaḥ vēda vēdānta pāragāḥ*

All the Vēdas, Itihāsas and Purāṇas and other authorities, reputed scholars in Vēdas and other scriptures, great sages and saints and philosophers have all propounded these five things only:—

1. The nature of Brahman to be attained.
2. The nature of the individual self that is worthy to attain God.

3. The means to attain God.
4. The result to be gained by the attainment of God.
5. The impediments to the attainment of God.

These five subjects comprise “Arthapanchaka jñāna”; and knowledge of these five subjects is the couch possessing the five qualities of comfort—the couch on which Nīla and Kṛṣṇa rest—Panchaśayanam). God-consciousness, God-realisation, becomes easy to those who possess this fivefold knowledge.

3. *Kottalar pūṅguḷaṉ nappinnai koṅgaimēl vaittukkiḍandamalar mārbā vāy tiravāy*

“Nīlādēvi has decorated her tresses with clusters of blooming flowers; and Kṛṣṇa has lain on the bed with his chest impinging on her breasts. O Kṛṣṇa, you of the broad chest, just speak one word.”

Owing to their contact with the tresses of Nīlādēvi, the clusters of flowers bloom forth with greater freshness than when they happen to be on the trees. The reason is not far to seek; it is Kṛṣṇa's touch that Nīla's tresses frequently enjoy; it is Time that causes the bloom in flowers. “Kālaḥ Kalayatā maham” “Lord Śrīkṛṣṇa himself is the embodiment of Time; and the touch of his hand makes the flowers to blossom. The gōpikas have taken the vow that during the period of the ritual they will not deck themselves with flowers. They therefore ask Nīla why she has decked herself with flowers. “We languish in the fire of separation which will scorch flowers in full bloom, if worn by us, and turn them pale and shrivelled. How then do you choose to enjoy union with Kṛṣṇa, with flowers in your hair increasing in freshness and bloom?” Śrīdēvi is associated both with the individual selves and with the Supreme Self. So the individual selves take her into their fold when they are in troubles and clamour for relief. But when they reach God, they worship her along with Him. So here they regard her as one of themselves and tell her that it is improper that she should make herself happy while they groan in misery.

As the gōpikas peep through the crevices in the doorway, they see Nīla rising in preparation to open the door. But Kṛṣṇa stops her, pulls her back, throws her flat on the bed and prevents

her from rising by locking her in his embrace. The gōpikās address Kṛṣṇa; “Kṛṣṇa, we see how you are enslaved by her tresses, which are braided with bunches of fresh blooming flowers, and how you cling to her bosom. Have you in this mood of exhilaration forgotten to open the door? We are reluctant to disturb you. We wish you all happiness. But can you not spare a word for us without disturbing yourself? It is the touch of her bosom that has enlarged your chest. The flowers in her hair have bloomed with Kṛṣṇa’s touch; and Kṛṣṇa’s bosom widened with the touch of her elevated breasts. “Sadaikarūpa rūpāya: The Supreme who retains always the same Form has bloomed.” This change in Him is brought about by the influence of Śrī who is inseparably united with Him. The Supreme Self, who does not undergo changes like expansion or compression, now expands and blooms because of his kinship with Śrīdēvi. Enamoured of her tresses of intense love and resting on her breasts of knowledge and devotion, the Supreme touches with fondness the clusters of flowers of spiritual aspirants braided in her hair with her love. Expansion and compression are no doubt blemishes when they are born of Karma. But they are not to be so regarded when the Supreme undergoes them out of His great mercy for His devotees.

Again, the situations presented here show that Śrī Kṛṣṇa has thrown Nīlādēvi flat on the couch and rested on her; and that he has made her rest on his bosom and locked her in his embrace. Lakṣmi, the resplendent power, remains merged with the Supreme. Sometimes, she is up and the Supreme is under her. In the state of supplication, Lakṣmi is up, actively bringing individual aspirants close to the Supreme. In the state of realisation or enjoyment of attainment, she merges into or keeps under the Supreme and is worshipped by the individual selves.

The situations which appear to be full of passionate love are presented by the gōpikas, only to show these spiritual nuances in the concept of Spouse Divine.

“Ananyā Rāghavē nāham Bhāskarēṇa prabhā yathā” The gōpikas realise that to request those, who are inseparable as sun and sunlight, to come to them separately is improper. To separate them is to perpetuate the crime that Rāvaṇa has committed. So they pray that he may just speak a word to them. His word alone is what gives us protection. “Mā śucaḥ: Do not grieve.” This

word of Kṛṣṇa has relieved Arjuna of his grief. Again, when Kṛṣṇa says from Dwāraka that Draupadi should have raiment without intermission, has not Draupadi been saved from dishonour? One word of Kṛṣṇa is enough to relieve them of their consuming agony; and so they plead for it. Vēda is the exhalation of the Supreme's breath; and it gives us protection. It is more beneficial to us to hear His word, the Vēdas, than to attempt to vision Him.

4. *maittaḍaṅgaṇṇi nāy*

"O Nīlādēvi, your eyes are enlarged by being smeared with collyrium." As there is no response from Kṛṣṇa, the gōpikas peep into the room through the crevices in the window. It appears to them that Nīlādēvi who is lying below him is cautioning him with her eyes not to rise and not to speak. Nīlādēvi has smeared her large eyes with collyrium. They tell her: "O Nīlādēvi! the beauty of your eyes and the collyrium with which they are smeared are intended to bring the Lord under your spell, so that you may bring Him within our reach and not to keep Him away from us. Entranced by the beauty of your eyes the Lord will say: 'Najīvēyam Kṣaṇamapi vinā tā masitēkṣaṇām: I cannot live even for a moment without you, the dark-eyed beloved. If it is the Lord's look that keeps the world alive, it is your look, the look of your dark eyes, that keeps the Lord alive. She has a perfect knowledge of God's Nature and she has never separated from It. The spaciousness of her eyes constricts even the nature of God. She has smeared her eyes with collyrium. That collyrium is the love of God and is worn by all those who have knowledge of His nature. And to those who are smeared with it, the phenomenon of God, which like a treasure is kept hidden, becomes clear in every detail. Bhakti Siddhānjanēna nidhi miva mahimānam bhun-jatē: This collyrium of devotion rips from the eye the scales of illusion that cause dissipation and withdrawal of effort to understand the nature of God. So long as the salve which remedies biliousness is not applied to the eye, the conch does not appear to be white, however bright the light may be in which it is seen. (Pittaghnamanjana manāpuṣi jatu nētrī naiva prabhābhirapi śankha sitattva buddhih). God's nature will not become fully clear to the person who does not smear his eye with the salve of love, however extensive and deep his knowledge may be. The gōpikas tell Nīlādēvi that to be engrossed in God-experience while God's love is being shattered is quite unworthy of her.

“While we have taken a pledge and given up the application of collyrium (anjana) to the eyes, is it proper for you to smear your eyes with it? It is not for your sake that you have smeared your eyes with it. It is only to help us to that condition. Have you forgotten this, O lady with the dark eyes?” Blackness makes for coolness; and coolness comes to the eye as a result of loving considerateness. The eyes of the mother are black, even because she is perfect in love. The blackness of her eyes indicates her devoted love for her husband and her gracious considerateness for her children. However ignorant her children be and however mischievous, the mother’s eye does not become red with anger but remains black and cool. After seeing Sīta, Hanumān thinks that Rāma and Sīta are well-matched; and that Sīta, in fact, excels Rāma in one particular. Her eyes have never given up their darkness:

*“Tulya śilavayō vṛttām tulyābhijana lakṣaṇām
Rāghavārhati vaidēhim tam chēyamasitēkṣaṇā.*

On all counts of noble birth, age, conduct and character, Rāghava and Sīta are each worthy of the other.” Saying this, Vālmīki adds this feature of ‘dark eyes’ to Sīta. Similarly, the gōpikas lay emphasis on the blackness in Nīlādēvi’s eyes, when they address her as ‘the lady with dark eyes.’ The idea evidently is that it is the blackness of her eyes that enables her to hide our lapses from Him and to mitigate His stern dictatorial ways towards us.

5. *Nīyūṁ maṇālanai eṭṭanai pōdum tuyilela voṭṭāy kāṇ*

“You will not let your lover to wake up from sleep even for a moment. You who have complete identity with your lover, his will being yours and your will being his, you who are to be instrumental in securing him for us, should draw him under your spell with a smiling look or a freezing frown, and give him over to us. Is it fair that you should yourself obstruct him from us? We have come here with high hopes that through your good offices we can attain your lover, who, charmed by your love, acts according to your wish. He belongs only to you; and our claim to him is based on our relationship with you!” Kṛṣṇa has titles like ‘Lord of the World,’ and ‘lover of the gōpikas’; and he belongs to the whole world and to all the gōpikas. But as Nīlādēvi monopolises him as her own and forbids his movement, the gōpikas jealously

taunt her by saying "your lover." Kṛṣṇa releases his hold on her, only to embrace her the more tightly a moment later; but even this momentary separation makes Nīlādēvi turn pale. The gōpikas realise that Nīlādēvi has been preventing Kṛṣṇa from rising, because of her fear that she may lose him. So they assure her: "We have come here only to render devoted services to you both; our coming here will not disturb your union; we have come to see and rejoice at your union and pronounce our benediction. So please allow him to rise if for a brief while."

6. *Ettanai yēlum pirivāṭṭa gillāyāl tattuva maṇṛuttagavu
ēlōrempāvāy*

"Your inability to endure even a moment's separation from the Lord is unworthy of your nature and inconsistent with your characteristic tendency. Could it be that, in that momentary separation, you experience all the agony that we pass through from without on account of our aloofness from him? Though you are with him, you appear to be suffering from the grief of possible separation even though it lasts for a brief while. That is why the Lord, unable to pull himself away from you, keeps us aloof. It goes against your grain not to put up with separation from him. Such conduct is unworthy of one of your stature in unaccountable love and easy accessibility. Has not Sītā endured such separation for ten long months to rescue the celestial women from their captivity in Lanka? Could you not put up with a few brief moments of separation from him? To be frank, you have no mercy. It is untrue to say that you are merciful. Yet you cannot bear the sight of any one being cruelly treated by another. (When Ānjanēya proposes to chastise the Rākṣasa women, Sītā intervenes and dissuades him from it saying, "Is there any one who has not committed mistakes? *Nakaschinnāparādhyati*). We are yours; and we are in misery on account of separation from your lover. Should you not rescue us from this plight by taking us to his presence? Your lover may threaten the wicked that he will fling them into the wombs of the Rākṣasas (*Kṣhipāmi*). But, between ourselves, can you bring yourself to utter such threats? It is up to you not to ignore us, people in dire distress.

Urged by revenge, Rāma takes a vow that he will not return to his capital until after he has killed Rāvaṇa, who has carried off his wife. But look at Sītā. Out of her graciousness, and wishing

to do Rāvaṇa a good turn, Sita advises him, despite all the harm he has done her to make friends with Rāma and live. Such, we know, is the measure of your mercy. How is it then that we meet with such apathy from you? The Lord is the King of the whole universe: *Patim viśvasya*: and, it follows, that Lakṣmi is the Queen of all the elements: *Īśvarīm sarvabhūtānām*. Normally, it is unfair to you to rank you as on a par with Him; you are superior to Him in love and accessibility. But now that you treat us with indifference, we are obliged to place you on a par with Him. As the mediator, you should have appeared before us much earlier and prepared and polished us before presenting us to the Lord. It is against your grain to cling to the Lord, setting at naught your natural obligations. You are the Mother of the whole universe; you are the Refuge of all those who find no shelter. Should you not be of help in the same way as a mother is to her children? Should you not take under your sheltering wing those who have none else to look up to for protection? Should you consider yourself only as the installed Queen of the Lord of the Immortals and confine yourself in regal aloofness to the interior palace?"

Unable to endure further delay and smarting under her silence and inaction, the gōpikas address these bitter words to Nīlādēvi and pray that she should move quickly on their behalf and secure his favour for them.



PĀṢURAM XX

PREFACE.

The Supreme Phenomenon is Nārāyaṇa coupled with Śrīdēvi. Śrīmannārāyaṇa is the object to be attained by those who wish for liberation; and Śrīmannārāyaṇa is also the instrument (means) to realise the objective. Śrīdēvi makes the individual self worthy of acceptance by God, by removing his hostile attitude and promoting in him the wish to seek Nārāyaṇa as the only means to realise Him. Hence it is that Śrīdēvi is regarded as the Puruṣakāra, influencing mediator. After realising the Supreme, the objective to be pursued is to render dedicated service to Him; and this service belongs to Śrīmannārāyaṇa. So it is essential for a sentient being to seek the favour of both Śrī and Nārāyaṇa. The previous Pāsuram and this one signify this duty and need, as the gōpikas awaken Nīlādēvi and Kṛṣṇa together; and they are the incarnations of Śrī and Śrīpati respectively. Unable to put up with the delay in seeing Kṛṣṇa and getting united with him, the gōpikas speak bitterly to Nīlādēvi, telling her that her present unjust attitude of not leaving her lover even for a moment is inconsistent with her nature and character. Nīlādēvi, being the embodiment of motherhood, feels no irritation at their words; she knows that those words merely reflect their misery. She pities them; and thinks that any hasty interference will damage their cause; and so waits for a suitable opportunity to help them. The gōpikas find her silence intolerable. Even if they win her favour, the final benefactor is Kṛṣṇa himself. And so they switch over to Kṛṣṇa and try to awaken him by glorifying his attributes. "You have earned a reputation in the past by going to the rescue of the celestial denizens from their miserable plight. There is the danger of that good name being wiped out, if you fail to show us mercy now. The world thinks that you are stainless and upright; but your conduct now is unbecoming of you." Even then there is no response. The gōpikas then apprehend that the lord has assumed silence because their bitter words to Nīlādēvi have irritated him. So they try to remove that irritation by singing in praise of Nīlādēvi, her great beauty and her excellent qualities: "Mother, the Lord will fulfil our wish only when he is charmed by your beauty and

excellence. He is not independent. He follows the directions implied in the movements of your eyebrows. We pray that you will mediate and see that he grants our wish. We depend on you. Awaken him and commend us to his mercy." Thus they wake up both.

Fascinated by Śrīdēvi's charms, the Lord turns a blind eye to our lapses and saves us. Her beauty which provides Him with enjoyment ensures His protection for us. Our Lord's strength and valour will themselves eliminate our enemies and secure our safety. But they will not flow in our direction and operate, so long as the Lord remains indifferent to us. Reckoning our shortcomings and thinking that we should suffer the consequences of our own actions till we find remedies for them, the Lord maintains studied indifference. However much the gōpikas praise his strength and valour and glorify his other excellences, he remains mute. So they turn to praise Nīlādēvi's beauty. Lakṣmīdēvi, the Divine Mother, tries to influence the Lord in our favour by making use of different methods of approach. ('Uchitairupā air vismārya svajanayapi matā tadasi.') Finally, she draws Him under the spell of her beauty by taking recourse to loving blandishments and charms. Once He is under her sway, she obtains favours for all the devotees. That is the reason why the devotees describe her beauty and glorify her charms. Some people raise a doubt about the propriety of describing the beauty of the Mother. But the fact remains that what gives protection to the individual selves is the beauty of the Mother. But for its active influence, the Lord will not have given us protection at all. In this pāsuram, the gōpikas praise the attractive beauty of the breasts, the nether lip and the waist of Nīlādēvi; and they pray to her to rise and grant their wish.

*Muppattu mūvar amararkku munṣenṟu
kappam tavirkkum kaliyē! tuyileḷāy
ṣeppamuḍaiyāy! tiraluḍaiyāy! ṣeṟṟārkku
veppamkoḍukkum vimalā! tuyileḷāy
ṣeppanna menmulai ccevvāy cciṟumarungul
nappinnainanḡāy! tiruve! tuyileḷāy
ukkamum taṭṭoliyum tandun maṇāḷanai
ippōḍe yemmai nirāṭṭēlō rempāvāy*

Summary.

“O Puissant Warrior! How graciously you advance into the battlefield long before danger threatens, and stand in the forefront if only to rescue thirty three crores of celestials from fear of their enemies! Pray, wake up! Of immense strength and great uprightness and absolute purity, you are by nature inclined always to give protection; and regarding the foes of your suppliants as your own enemies you strike them with terror. We request you to wake up.

O Nīlādēvi, how perfect you are in beauty with breasts like gold tumblers and ruby nether lip (resembling the fruit of *coccinia indica*—donḍa, kovai), and slender waist! Pray, wake up! Full of perfection, you are equal to Lakṣmi. Do give us the fan and the mirror; and help us to bathe together with your lord, Śrīkrṣṇa.”

Commentary.

1. *Mūppattu mūvar amararku munṣenṟu kappam tavirkum kalīyē Tuyileṭāy*

“O Warrior! You who advance and take your place in the forefront, thus chasing away the fear of thirty three crores of celestial beings who follow you! Arise from sleep.”

The gōpikas seem to be making an enquiry thus: “Lord! We have tried to awaken you; but you have not responded. For you to rise and do a favour, is there any prescription about the number of the beneficiaries who seek that favour? Is there any regulation that your response should come, only if the number be thirty three crores and not less—not five lakhs?” It is usual to speak of the immortals as numbering thirty three crores. But in the Vēda, their number is limited only to thirty three—eight Vasuvūs, eleven Rudrās, twelve Ādityas and the two celestial physicians, Aswinīs. In strength and knowledge, the celestials are far superior to human beings. Still, unable to ward off the dangers that befall them with their own resources, they seek refuge in God. When we know that the number of those who seek refuge in God and get over their fears is limited to thirty three, we see how difficult of attainment is this subject of God. When danger looms large before the thirty three immortals, and even before it strikes them or even before they go to Him for protection, the Lord Himself hastens to them, marches ahead of them in battle

and protects them from danger. By the use of the word 'immortals' here, it appears that God gives protection only to those whose knowledge has no limits, and not to those of little knowledge. Deathlessness does not mean remaining in the body without making the body function in its duties.

Asannēva sa bhavati asad Brahmēti vēdachēt

Asti Brahmēti chēdvēda santamēnam tatō viduḥ.

"He who thinks that Brahman is not, himself is not. He who knows that Brahman is, himself also is." Thus, as the Śruti says, one who has knowledge of Brahman is immune to death, is immortal. The Lord appears before such immortals long before the enemy Avidya (Ignorance) actually occupies their minds and prevents them from acquiring the full knowledge of the Brahman. Thus the Lord's timely presence removes the fears that Nescience is about to strike and overpower their minds.

The fears that disturb sages are not similar to ours. To them, fear lies in any break that comes in their perennial consciousness of God. By inducing in them perpetual recollection of the subject of God, the Supreme Himself removes all cause of fear of a break in it. It is not our effort but God's grace that has the power to destroy ignorance and stimulate meditation on Him. It is the Supreme Self alone that has the competence to save the spiritual aspirants; He appears before them in advance, so that they may not be frightened by the bondage of birth; and lifts them up from death by giving them knowledge, which leads them to a loving contemplation of Him. The gōpikas here ask for a similar favour.

In thus awakening Kṛṣṇa, they put forward questions which smack of ridicule. "(1) Is there any regulation that the number of people seeking succour should reach a particular figure if they are to be saved? Are you, Kṛṣṇa, thinking that you need not feel concerned if the number is only five lakhs? Should it be 33 crores if you are to act? (2) Have you resolved to come to the aid of the strong, only men, and not to the rescue of the weak, the women? (3) Could it be that you have made up your mind, only to rush to the rescue of the immortals who make an effort to save themselves, with only a partial reliance upon your help? Why do you hold back from us, who have given up all effort, under the strong conviction that there is none to save us but you? (4) Could it be that your help is forthcoming only to those who

wish to ward off death by securing nectar and become immortal? Should you not benefit us who long for your happiness even though we die? (5) Do you have consideration only for those immortals who seek your favour to achieve a different purpose, and not for those who seek you *for yourself only* and not for any other benefit? (6) You are inclined, perhaps, to favour only those who, after achieving their ends with your help, turn against you, like Indra who prepares to kill you with his thunderbolt on the charge that you are carrying off the pārijāta plant from his garden. Yes; why should you bother to favour people like us, who long for your service at all times and in all places and circumstances? (7) How is it that Indra and other celestial rulers of the regions in the eight different directions, who are proud of their sovereignty, alone appear worthy of your favour? Why need you take cognizance of us who surrender to you and regard ourselves as your humble servants? (8) You hasten to rescue those who keep you in the forefront of the field of battle, exposing you as a target to the enemies' shafts. Good. How is it you keep back from us who feel concerned about your safety and long to see your beauty? (9) You run to the aid of immortals, those who do not die even if struck by the enemy. But you do not care for us who cannot live without you. How strange! (10) You submit to those who, ignorant that you are the very embodiment of nectar, subject you to bear the weight and pressure of the mountain, that is used for churning the ocean of milk—all this in pursuit of nectar of mean value! Should you not show your favour to us to whom your face and your looks are more than nectar—the very sustenance, nourishment and the enjoyment of our lives? (11) Is your help reserved for the proficient only? Cannot the incompetent expect help from you? You proffer protection to the celestial celebrities before they face danger. But you do not choose to save us from the danger into which we have fallen! How unfair! Of your own accord you go to them and volunteer to take over their task; but here we go to you and earnestly plead for your help—and you remain unresponsive! Are we to understand that you will be of use only to those who summon you and entrust work to you and not to those who go to your house and wait anxiously for a glimpse of you? Well, it is your nature to come to our homes and give us protection. But unable to keep aloof from you, we have walked up to your mansion, although it is against our nature to do so. Could it be that our strange conduct in

coming to you has given you offence? While it is for you to think of us and take us to your presence, we have been constantly thinking of you. May it be that you deem our preoccupation with you an offence! Normally, it is for you to accost us first; are you offended that we have spoken before we are spoken to? (12). You cure the celestials of their nervous palpitation, which is caused by fear of their enemies. We too shiver; but our quiver is different from that of the others. Fear of enemy is not the cause of our tremulousness. What makes us tremble is the fear that we may lose the privilege of seeing your beauty as you awaken and of singing your benediction at that time. Won't you help us to get over this nervous fear? You are very strong and we are very weak. We have no strength of our own. Your strength is our strength. So you should protect us with your strength. To protect us you need not have to wage a battle! You need not have to wield the disc in violation of your pledge! You need not have to expose yourself as target to any dreadful weapon, as you had to in intercepting Bhagadatta's mortal Śakti in order to save Arjuna from it. You need not have to bear a mountain (like Mandara), as you had to, when trying to restore the kingdom to Indra and other immortals. All that you need to do to help us is to permit us to see the radiant beauty of your countenance as you wake up from sleep. From the time you came down to Nandavraja, all the immortals have settled down in our village; and they are now with us for their daily worship. But we are not like them. All that we desire is to see the beauty of your figure as you awaken, the attractiveness of your benign looks as they move and the melody of your clever words as they are spoken.

2. *Ṣeppa muḍaiyāy, tīral uḍaiyāy*

'You are a person of great uprightness and remarkable valour.'

3. *Ṣeṇṇārkkū veppamkoḍukkum vimalā tuyileṭāy*

'O Stainless One who inspires the enemy with excessive fear! Give up sleep!

The word "Ṣeppam" has two meanings, 'protection' and 'uprightness.' While grappling with enemies he has a natural armour to protect himself against harm. He is not merely a protector of himself; 'protecting' is his very nature, his dominant quality; and it shows itself at all times.

*Rakṣitā jīvalōkasya dharmasya parirakṣitā,
Rakṣitā svasya dharmasya, swajanasya cha rakṣitā.*

Śrīrāma is the protector of the whole world of living beings; he is the protector of his dharma and that of the people; he is the protector of his kith and kin." Thus while praising the characteristic qualities of Śrīrāma in the Rāmāyaṇa, emphasis is laid on the quality of protection as the most outstanding feature. "With 'protection' as your chief characteristic, is it right on your part to ignore giving protection to us, who are your close kith?"

The other meaning of 'Ṣeppam' is 'uprightness.' Uprightness consists in the maintenance of consistency in thought, word and deed. Even though we lack uprightness, you can by your righteousness make us tread the right path. So give up sleeping and wake up. When we have come all the way desiring only you, you should have felt pained for the trouble we have undergone and come to us to welcome us. But you indulge in sleep. Is this consistent with the word you have given us?" 'Righteousness' may apply to ŚrīRāma; but can we see it in Śrīkṛṣṇa? Is he not a liar? When Sūrpaṇakha assumes a beautiful form and questions Rāma who he is, Rāma being strictly upright gives out the full truth as it is: "Ṛjubudditayā sarva mākhyātu mupachakramē." Śrīkṛṣṇa is not of such nature. Why then do the gōpikas address him as an upright person? This doubt need not arise. Śrīkṛṣṇa declares: "O Draupadi, the sky may collapse; the earth may turn to dust; the Himālaya may be shattered into pieces; the ocean may dry up; but my word never fails.

*Dyauḥ patēt prithivī śīryēt, Himavān śakalibhavēt
Suṣyē tṛḍyanidhiḥ, Kṛṣṇē namē mōgham vāchō bhavēt."*

From this it is clear that the gōpikas are right in addressing him as an upright man; for he has ever kept his word. Righteousness cannot be regarded as virtue if, having it, Kṛṣṇa suffers humiliation at the hands of the enemy. Possessing uprightness, he must make it impossible for his enemies to humiliate him. To those who seek his favour, he shows himself upright. He does not hesitate to thwart the purposes of those opposed to his supplicants by adopting even questionable means. To Pāṇḍavas he has been upright all through. But Kauravas find his actions reprehensible. He handles the disc against his pledged word; he turns day temporarily into night just to enable Arjuna to redeem his threat

The gōpikas are right when they say:

“To us, your suplicants, you should show your uprightness and not your capacity in reducing people to humiliation.”

The Supreme has six main attributes: knowledge, power, strength, sovereignty, vitality and effulgence. He shows his righteousness in protecting the world and strength in bearing its weight. He withdraws the whole world, sentient and insentient, into Himself at the time of dissolution and releases it at the time of creation, finding for each creature a suitable body conforming to its past Karma. In this He shows His righteousness tempered with His gracious considerateness. In holding the world as His body, He manifests His strength. The gōpikas advance the plea: “To us who believe that you are All-in-all, how is it you lie asleep and not give protection with your righteousness? It is your nature to frighten enemies but not your dependants. Is it just that you should make us suffer from the fever of fear while we pine away because of separation from you?” “Samoham sarvabhūteṣu namē dvēṣōsti na priyaḥ: “I am the same for all elements. I have neither friend nor foe.” To Kṛṣṇa who has made the above declaration there can be no enemy. He is the friend of all beings. True. Though he has no enemies of his own, those who hate his supplicants become his enemies. When Kṛṣṇa goes to the Kaurava court as the ambassador of Pāṇḍavas, he does not accept the hospitality of Duryōdhana, Drōṇa and Bhīṣma; but goes straight to Vidura's house and dines with him. When Duryōdhana questions him why he has chosen this way, he replies: “Dviṣa-dannam na bhōktavyam dviṣantam naiva bhōjayēt mama prāṇaḥ Pāṇḍavāḥ: To take food from an enemy is forbidden; so is giving food to an enemy equally forbidden. The Pāṇḍavas are the vital breath of my life; and you hate them. Thus you have become my enemy.” Śrīkṛṣṇa is magnanimous in treating the enemies of his friends as his own enemies and in chasing away the fear of their enemies from his friends. He goes further and infects the enemies of his friends with the fever of fear.

Out of his love for his suplicants, Kṛṣṇa sometimes acts heartlessly towards their enemies. But he catches no stain. He remains blameless. While dispensing joys and sorrows he does not act as he pleases; he takes into account their previous Karma. So if some people have joys and others sorrows for their lot, Kṛṣṇa

cannot be charged with partiality or hatred or cruelty. To him all are equals; only, they get what they deserve. No stain attaches to Kṛṣṇa by this apportionment of joys and sorrows among the people. He remains ever pure. Soliciting his protection is itself merit. Not seeking his mercy is itself sin. He saves his suppliants by giving them the instrument which elevates them and leads them to salvation. He destroys those who do not care for him by giving them the implement which brings them to their ruin. In that lies the immaculateness of the Supreme. He accedes to Duryōdhana's request and gives him what he wants—his army, which proves futile ultimately. Arjuna wants him only; and Kṛṣṇa places himself at Arjuna's disposal and renders him even menial services. Thus what the Supreme bestows corresponds to the Karma of the individual. And so He remains blameless. The gōpikas continue their supplication:

"All along you have fulfilled the wishes of the celestials who have sought favours from you. For their protection you have annihilated their enemies treating them as your enemies. You have thus earned a great reputation as the protector of suppliants. We are weak, we seek *you* only and no other benefit from you; and we come to you and request you to wake up. If you do not accede to this, there is the risk of your reputation being wiped out. So Lord, arise and come to us." Despite these prayers of the gōpikas, Śrīkṛṣṇa lies still. He does not even say a word in response. The gōpikas recall how in the incarnation of Rāma, he has allowed Sita, to whom life without him is death, to grovel in Rāvaṇa's captivity in order to facilitate fulfilment of the cause of the immortals. They feel it is no good trying to move such a hard-hearted person. They then turn to the considerate Nīlādēvi.

4. *Ṣeppanna menmulai ccevvāy cciṟu maruṅgul nappinnai naṅgāy tiruvē tuyileḷāy*

"O Nīlādēvi! You who have soft breasts glowing like gold tumblers and red nether lip resembling the donḍa (Kovai) fruit and you of slender waist! Arise. You, another form of Śrī! Please wake up."

The gōpikās praise the beauty of Nīlādēvi and request her to wake up. Kṛṣṇa cannot come to them as he is no longer independent. Like an ornament preserved in a casket, Kṛṣṇa lies

imprisoned on the slopes of the elevated breasts of Nīla. It is only when the lid is opened that the ornament can be taken out. It is only when Nīla releases him from her bosom that he can come out. So they entreat Nīla that she may herself wake up the Lord who has crouched on her bosom. Thus do they arouse Nīla with a delicious description of her beauty.

When there is a famine, house-holders shift for themselves taking shelter on mountains or in ports. In the same way when conditions of spiritual famine prevail owing to failure of harvests of devout sentient beings Śrīmannārāyaṇa has to shift for Himself! He takes shelter on the hills as an Archāmūrti, (Adorable Image); and on the Ocean of Milk as Vyūhamūrti (Sleeping-alertness); and coming down to the earth as Śrīkṛṣṇa, He has taken shelter on the bosom-summits of Nīlādēvi and gone to sleep. The gōpikas know that Nīlādēvi's bosom is Kṛṣṇa's residence and so praise its beauty. Her bosom is perfectly soft and delicate, unlike the bosoms of other women, which are hard. It cannot bear his separation even for a moment. So he does not leave it. She alone, out of consideration for the gōpikas, should awaken him and give him to them. Having taken repose on her elevated bosom, he sucks the honey of her nether lip; he bathes in the moonlight of her gentle smile. It is to enjoy her nether lip and her gentle smile that he has undergone the ordeal of yoking together the seven obstinate bulls. Though he enjoys sucking the ripe fruit of her nether lip, her slender waist causes him fright that it may collapse any moment. Thus is Kṛṣṇa always enfolded in the embrace of Nīlādēvi. As he cannot free himself from her spell, the gōpikas request Nīlādēvi to release him and make him available to them. "Though your name is Nīlādēvi, you are for certain Śrīdēvi herself. Like her, you are perfect in all the virtues. It is by your virtues that your lover has attained excellence: Śraddhayā dēvō dēvatva masnutē. It is through kinship with Lakṣmīdēvi that the Lord has attained divinity. When she incarnates as Sīta, she lives away from Rāma for ten long months in Lanka, so that she may effect the release of women kept in captivity by Rāvaṇa. Should you not likewise understand the difficulties of women and help us to attain Śrīkṛṣṇa?"

The gōpikas first seek God's favour directly. Then realising that it cannot be obtained without the gracious help of Lakṣmī,

the influencing mediator, they turn to her and request her to be favourably disposed towards them. While describing her beauty, they give priority to her breasts, which signify parabhakti and paramabhakti, the pleasures most agreeable to the Lord. Parabhakti lies in having a vision of the Lord, in having His darśan. Paramabhakti consists in the anxious concern of the devotee that he may lose sight of the Lord, which situation he cannot bear even for a moment. These two, 'Parabhakti' and 'Paramabhakti,' provide the greatest enjoyment to the Supreme Person, and so are compared to a woman's breasts and nether lip. As Nīlādēvi has a thorough grasp and experience of the subject of God, God submits completely to her devotion; He is like the ornament in the casket. Her breasts are the lids that enclose Him. Breasts are usually described as hard; but her breasts are described as soft and delicate. By this is indicated that she is unable to endure even a moment's separation from the Lord. Nīlādēvi has enjoyed Him to perfection; she cannot endure His absence even for a moment. Such is her loving devotion, Parabhakti, and inseparable loyalty, Paramabhakti. One who is attached to God feels engrossed in Him and detached from all objects unconnected with Him: Paramātmā niyōraktaḥ viraktaḥ aparamātmāni. The gōpikas request her to be gracious towards them.

Lakṣmi is eagerly sought after by the whole world. But Lakṣmi cannot leave the Supreme even for a moment and so clings to Him. As she has no other interest or attachment, her waist is described as thin. The gōpikas appeal to Nīla for mercy. "O Nīlādēvi, you have renunciation itself as your slender waist; please wake up and do us this favour." "Your name is Nīlādēvi; yet you are, verily, Lakṣmi herself. Śrī is both the influencing mediator and the object to be attained. You have the qualities of love and dependence on God, which are essential for the role you play, that of influencing mediator. You have also the qualities of one who is worthy to be attained—qualities such as mercy, patience, endurance, softness, goodness. Thus are you perfect. It is your responsibility to take us to the Supreme. If you do not favour us, who else will? We therefore pray that you will awake and help us," Nīlādēvi is moved; she answers from within: "I am not sleeping. I am only thinking about you. Let me know your wish. What do you want? And how is it to be given to you?"

5. 5. *Ukkamum taṭṭōliyum tandun maṇālanai ipṇōdēyemmai
nīrāṭṭu eḷōrempāvāy*

“Give us the fan and the mirror; and arrange that we may have a bath with your lover.”

The fan and the mirror are among the articles required for their ritual. “After providing us with these implements, please arrange that we and your lover, whose nature it is to do as you wish, have a bath together now.” As theirs is a ritual of bath, they entreat her to arrange for a bath with Kṛṣṇa for fulfilment. They want that the bath should be arranged immediately for fear that if there is any delay their elders may raise some obstacles to it. Again, they show her their thin bodies which have languished on account of separation from him, and plead that she may bring them immediate relief by arranging the bath with him. The Rṣis who meet ŚrīRāma in Daṇḍaka forest seeking his protection, show him their emaciated bodies, so as to melt his heart with pity: “*ēhi paśya śarīrāṇi*: Come and have a look at our bodies.” Some may notice impropriety or want of taste in this request of the gōpikas to Nīlādēvi. Nīlādēvi loves Kṛṣṇa; and is it not impolite to ask her to arrange a bath for them with her lover? No. The Supreme is the instrument to lead the individual selves to Himself. He is also the goal to be attained by all of them. He is both the means and the end. All are to reach Him, sooner or later, according to the merit at their credit. It is to bring out this idea that the gōpikas entreat Nīla to join them with Kṛṣṇa in a bath. The ‘bath of gōpikas with Kṛṣṇa’ only means ‘the attainment of God’ by them. They must attain Him, only through the Mother. The Supreme becomes attainable, only because of our relationship with her. He will not welcome us, unless we are commended by her. It is said that though ŚrīRāma is enthused by the radiant beauty and excellent qualities of Sita, he has loved her primarily because his father has brought about that alliance: (*Priyātu Sītā Rāmasya dārāḥ pitṛkṛtāyiti*). In a similar way, the Supreme loves most only those that win the Mother’s favour and are commended by her. Hence the gōpikas do not ask her to take them to ‘Kṛṣṇa’; they entreat her to join them with ‘her lover.’ We are dependents, and we aspire for her kinship. The Supreme accepts us seeing only our relationship with her. Bhagavān is the lake into which she first enters and then conducts us safely

into it. That is why she is called “Śrī”; she finds refuge in the Supreme; and she is sought after by us in order that we may enter the Brahman with her help.

The bath that they hanker after is the plunge into the stream of God-experience. Mirror and fan are the implements needed for this bath. The fan, when wafted, dries up the drops of sweat on the body and gives relief. The sorrows that afflict the individual selves are caused by egoism and possessiveness, the sense of ‘I’ and ‘mine.’ If the notions of ‘I’ and ‘mine’ are eliminated, sorrows disappear. Getting rid of the feelings of ‘I’ and ‘mine,’ which are the enemies of God-experience, depends upon the gracious mercy of the mother. ‘Namaḥ’ acts like a fan. The mirror by its power of reflection makes us aware of our own form. The praṇava (Ōmkāra) enables us to have the knowledge of the individual self. ‘Ōm’ enables us to understand clearly what we are and that jīva (makāra vāchya) belongs only to the Supreme Self (akāra-vāchya). Praṇava therefore is the mirror.

The highest end to pursue is to render all services to the Supreme, called Nārāyaṇa. Immersion in devoted service constitutes the bath. This request for fan and mirror and for arrangement of bath with Kṛṣṇa has a deep significance. It is a request (1) for the removal of Ahamkāra and Mamakāra which oppose the attainment of God; (2) for giving the true knowledge of the nature of the self and (3) for helping to attain the Supreme by using her good offices as mediator. The gōpikas seek Nīla’s favour and request her to adopt a helpful attitude.



PĀŚURAM XXI

PREFACE.

Nīlādēvi wakes up and tells the gōpikas: "I am one of you. You will never find me wanting when you approach me. Come. Let us all together awaken Kṛṣṇa and make our request." She takes them to Kṛṣṇa and begins waking him up. Śrī Mahālakṣmi, too, is among the living creatures. But she is ever close to, and inseparable from, the Supreme. Though she is one of the sentient beings, she acts as mediator and brings the individual selves into contact with the Supreme. After they come into the Lord's presence, she joins Śrīmannārāyaṇa and becomes an object to be attained by them. Thus Lakṣmi has three modes of manifestation: of being an individual self; of being an influencing mediator; of being an object to be attained along with God. She has to be looked at from these three planes. So long, the gōpikas have assumed that she is one of them; they have also sought her help as mediator and reached the presence of the Supreme. Lakṣmi joins the gōpikas in rejecting all other instruments and choosing Him as the only means of attaining Him. He is both the means and the end. Those who have no love for the Lord submit to Him, but only when they are unable to resist his arms; those who have love for Him submit to Him even because they are charmed by His attributes. Servitude is as much obligatory to the devotees as it is to the enemies. The devotees volunteer to become servants to Him as they are overcome by His excellences and easy accessibility. The enemies, that is, those who have no love for Him, do not seek His favour; they believe in their valour and they submit only to His superior might when they taste it. Lakṣmaṇa describes his relationship with Rāma: "I am, in the opinion of Rāma, his brother. But I regard myself as his servant because of his excellences." (*Ahamasyā varō bhrātā guṇairdāsyā mupāgataḥ*). In the same way as Lakṣmaṇa, moved by his love of Rāma, declares himself, though a brother, his servant, the gōpikas tell Kṛṣṇa that they have come to serve him because they are overcome by his great qualities and request him to fulfil their wishes.

Eṭṭrakalaṅgaḷ edirpoṅgi mīdalippa
māṭṭrādēpāl śoriyum vaḷḷal perumpaṣukkaḷ
āṭṭrappadaittān maganē! yaṟivuṟāy;
ūṭṭramuḍaiyāy! periyāy! ulaginil
tōṭṭramāy ninṟa ṣuḍare! tuyileḷāy
māṭṭrā runakku valitulaindu unvāṣarkaṇ
āṭṭrādu vandunnāḍi paṇiyumāppōle
pōṭṭriyām vandōm pugaḷndēlōrempāvāy

Summary.

O son of Nandagōpa who has innumerable strong cows, which are liberal in raining milk to fill the pots placed under their udders to overflowing, awake! O Form of the Supreme whose strength is avowed by scriptural authorities! O possessor of great glory as the doughty champion, pledged to protect all who seek succour! O Form of Effulgence manifesting Itself in this world! Wake up from sleep. In the same way as your enemies, overcome by your valour, humble themselves at your feet and seek your favour, we have come to your door, unable to keep away from you, to glorify your feet and pronounce benediction.

Commentary.

1. *Eṭṭra kalaṅgaḷ edirpoṅgi mīdalippa māṭṭrādē pālśoriyum*
vaḷḷall perum paṣukkaḷ āṭṭrappadaittān maganē Yaṟivuṟāy

“O son of Nandagōpa who has innumerable strong cows which are generous in raining milk to fill the pots placed under their udders to overflowing! Awake.”

Nandagōpa's valour, leadership, munificence and strength of arms are mentioned in the previous pāsurams. In this is described his prosperity in having plenty of cows. The various manifestations of God are to be taken as full and perfect; to make distinctions that some of them are higher than others is unwarranted. The same fulness or perfection is to be experienced in the Immanent One that shines in the heart, by constant meditation, as prescribed, on the incantation secured from the Āchārya; and in the Idol or Image which is worshipped in the temple; and in the perfect

Supreme Brahma glorified in the Vedas; and in the magnificent incarnations; and in the Vyūhās or quiescent modes of Divine existence.

The gōpikas declare that they have recognised that Lord Kṛṣṇa is no other than the Supreme Brahma propounded by the Vēdas. They address Kṛṣṇa as the son of Nandagōpa: "O Kṛṣṇa! we have come to seek your favour as you are the son of our Nandagōpa and as you are easily accessible. Before our Nanda could wish to have you for his son, you yourself have chosen to become his son and come down to us. We do not come to supplicate the favour of the Quiescent Form that has stretched Itself on the snake-bed on the Ocean of Milk. We do not come to seek the favour of Śrī Rāma who has kept himself under the control of sages like Vaiṣṭha. We do not come to solicit the grace of Śrī-mannārāyaṇa, who is adored by the Nityasūras (the Ever-wise) in Paramapada (the Heavenly Abode). But we come to you, Kṛṣṇa, for shelter, to you who have chosen to be born in our community and as son of our Nandagōpa, in order that you may have us. Please do wake up soon!"

Nandagōpa is the āchārya. An āchārya should have mastered all the Vēdas and their different adjuncts (Vēdāṅgas) and gained hold on the Supreme Self adumbrated by the Scripture. The cows represent the Vēdas and other scriptures, which are endless. Nanda's cows are innumerable. They are generous; the moment pots are placed under their udders, they rain milk to fill them to overflowing. The Vēda has more love than thousands of mothers and fathers put together. It has the power to fulfil all our desires. If the Vēdas are approached with reverence, any desire, however small it may be, will receive fulfilment.

*Yāvānārdha udapāne sarvatassamplutōdakē
Tāvān sarvēṣu vēdēṣu Brāhmanasya vijānataḥ*

Though there is plenty of water in the river, it provides water to each according to his need and thus benefits all. Similarly, the Vēda also secures whatever benefit each requires of it. The same magnanimity is to be found in the Supreme Self and in the āchārya.

The cows fill in pots with milk and seem to wait eagerly for more and more pots to fill in, without reckoning their size or their number. The moment pots are placed under their udders, they are filled; if more milk is not secured, the fault is not of the cows

but of the people milking them not pushing more pots under their udders. No pot that is placed under the udder remains unfilled. The same is true of God and of the āchārya. They will be eagerly searching for people who seek their aid. The moment they come across such seekers, they give them satisfaction by fulfilling their desires. And yet they do not consider themselves as benefactors; rather, they praise the beneficiaries as magnanimous in that they have been pleased to receive their humble services. But the pot has to be placed under the udder to be filled with milk. Likewise, the aspirant has to approach the āchārya; he has to turn to God and make the request to be benefited. When the disciples are impelled with an earnest desire for knowledge, the āchāryas are moved by pity and bestow on them all that they need and much more than they need. God's nature is to give protection; and that, for no particular reason. Is it necessary then to make a request to Him for protection? The pot is not filled with milk, unless it is placed under the cow's udder. Likewise, unless the aspirant turns to Him and makes the request, He will not take notice of Him. Then a doubt may crop up whether making the request does not become a means of attaining Him. Unless we ask for it, the bliss that results from spiritual experience cannot be considered to have been attained. Only when we have an objective worthy of achieving before us and a desire to attain it, it becomes a 'Puruṣārtha.' When we actually realise what is to be attained, it becomes "prāpya." As the worldly objects are subject to limitations, our desire for them also suffers from the same limitation. As spiritual experience lasts for all time, our desire for it is also infinite; so long as the soul lasts, the desire for spiritual experience also lasts. Hence this desire is not something extraneous or borrowed for an occasion but a part and parcel of the nature of self. Thus it is not an implement to achieve something else. Even Śrī Mahālakṣmi always prays for unbroken union with Śrīmannārāyaṇa pleading that she cannot stand a moment's separation from Him. The ever-wise, nityasūravas always desire to see the Supreme: Sadāpaśyanti sūrayaḥ. Desire for Him is a part of the nature of the self; it is not an extraneous means or implement. Like the Supreme Self, the āchārya also bestows as much knowledge on his disciples as they deserve to receive.

When milk is drawn into the vessels from the cows' teats, the force of the flow causes a froth in the receptacles; and the effervescence from below is out of proportion to the flow of milk

from above. The spiritual instructions of the āchārya fill the minds of the disciples; and as the latter assimilate their meaning and significance, there is an effervescence of ideas which support, strengthen and prove the āchārya's instructions. So much so, doubt arises as to how much of it owes to āchārya's instruction and how much to the originality and genius of the disciple. Even if the teat is pressed once, the milk released from it fills the pot to overflowing. The milk signifies the magnificence of the Lord's nature and attributes as propounded by the āchārya. The vessels are the disciples who receive the āchārya's instructions. The cows are the āchāryas. Nandagōpa has countless disciples who have acquired great scholarship and reached the full stature of āchāryas. In the same way as cows yield milk in Nandavraja, the āchāryās rain on their disciples instructions on the profound nature and subtle meaning of Sat from diverse points of view. When the disciple makes any earnest enquiry in reverent humility, the āchārya makes this an occasion to enlighten him on many subjects connected with the enquiry. When Arjuna, in all humility, seeks guidance on a single issue, Kṛṣṇa deals with many subjects connected with it without Arjuna's asking for them: "Listen to this also: Bhūya ēva mahābāhō. In a similar way, Parāśara expounds several matters by way of answering a single query from Maitrēya: "Maitrēya, listen to this, listen to this: Idamcha śṛṇu Maitrēya."

The āchāryas do not give this instruction thinking that they are conferring a great benefit on the disciples. They do so even because they cannot help doing so. The cows rain milk not because they think that they are benefitting any; but because, if they do not, they will have to suffer from pain in the teats. That is why they are considered to be highly generous. Śrī Yāmunāchārya praises Parāśara as a magnanimous sage for his discourses on Viṣṇu Purāṇa, which is a gem among ancient scriptures. Similarly, without any request from any quarter, Sri Nammālvār exhorts people to give up all: Viḍumin muttavum. Likewise, Tirumangai Ālvār has also started his teaching without any one asking for it. Such sages as these āchāryas are like the generous cows. They owe their magnanimity to their close connection with Śrīkṛṣṇa. Śrīkṛṣṇa has made himself easily accessible to weak women and ignorant people and has gone to the extent of conducting himself as their humble subordinate. These cows and the āchāryās are,

like Kṛṣṇa, easy to reach, generous and magnanimous and great. The cows have grown strong by the touch of Kṛṣṇa and become similar to him in shining perfection: *vajjal perum paṣukkal*. They may not be big in size but they are great by their magnanimity. The āchāryas who are sages may be unimpressive in figure (*cirumāmanicar*) but they are great by their genius and influence. Nanda has such cows in countless plenty. He is the āchārya of the world with innumerable disciples—and all of them are generous and magnanimous sages. If it is possible to count the excellences of Śrī Rāma, or the gems in the ocean, or the auspicious attributes of Śrīmannārāyaṇa, or the pranks and practical jokes of Śrīkṛṣṇa or the sins committed by the worldly people or their unspiritual qualities, or the number of births of a sentient being, or the number of incarnations assumed by God—then it may be possible to count the cows owned by Nanda. There is no limit to their number. Kṛṣṇa takes pride in the thought that, as Nandagōpa's son, all this affluence is his. He is the Lord of the universe. *Patim viśvasya*. But considering that possession of this prosperity of countless cows gives Him greater status, He has come down as Nanda's son. All-pervasiveness and Supremacy in Heavenly Abode are His natural rights. But Śrīkṛṣṇa feels more attached to Nandavraja and more pleased with his association with gōpālas, even because he has acquired them by taking birth in that community. So the gōpikas arouse the son of Nandagōpa, who is the proud possessor of such vast wealth and prosperity. It is enough if he wakes up; for, if he is awake, they are sure that their wishes will be readily fulfilled. The struggle and the torment last only till the Supreme wakes up; once He is up, all sorrow ceases. If it still persists, such persistence redounds to His shame. He will be blamed for its continuance. Once they awaken Him, the gōpikas feel happy and contented. "The prosperity you have inherited from your father should not make you deaf to our cries of agony. It is not given to fatten you to drowsiness. Relationship with Nanda is common to you and to us. Consequently, the prosperity of your father, which has passed on to you, is to be used for our protection and not misused for your laziness. You are born in our community, remember, only to strive for our protection."

The gōpikas have thus far mentioned five of the qualities of Nandagōpa:

1. One who holds the sharp spear (*Velāyudha*) and keeps alert to protect Kṛṣṇa and render him service.

2. One who is a leader
3. One who is a munificent benefactor, giving clothes, water and food to the needy on a generous scale.
4. One who possesses great prowess and strength of arms, that enable him to face and fight with tusked of enormous strength.
5. One who has innumerable cows which rain milk incessantly till all the pots placed under their udders fill to overflowing.

All these five qualities should be possessed by an Āchārya.

1. In his excessive love for the Supreme, who is the Saviour of all, he thinks of Him as needing protection and pronounces benediction on Him.
2. Unable to confine the enjoyment of spiritual experience to himself, he invites others and shares it with them.
3. He imparts (the Tirumantra) the auspicious incantation, which is the means to spiritual illumination and raises the disciple to the state of realisation that God is the sustenance, nourishment and the object of enjoyment.
4. He has the strength to resist and to overcome enemies who obstruct him or his disciples from attaining spiritual exaltation. He has the competence to bring the Supreme, who is like a mighty elephant, under control.
5. He has the gift of impressive eloquence by which he generously imparts all his experiences to his disciples. He has innumerable disciples who possess spiritual knowledge and attainments and who are generous in sharing them with others by their powers of speech.

The Supreme Self will be obedient to an āchārya having these qualities, in the same way as a son is to his father. In attaining Him, Lakṣmi and āchārya are the mediators. Only when we cultivate their contact and win their goodwill does the grace of God flow towards us. The gōpikas address Kṛṣṇa as "the son of our Nandagōpa" and as "one who submits to the control of

our āchārya.” “O Kṛṣṇa, Please wake up! You conduct yourself with obedience to the king of āchāryas, who has innumerable sages and generous preceptors as his disciples. He has mastered the eternal Vēdas (Scriptures) and has kept under his control the Supreme Self who is propounded by the Vēdas; thus is he able to bestow on any person whatever he needs—material prosperity, celestial pleasures, or the Heavenly Abode of the Supreme. After earning the goodwill of the āchārya what remains to be attained is the Supreme Phenomenon which is propounded by scriptural authorities.

2. *ūṭṭamuḍaiyāy*

“Established on the strongest authorities.” The gōpikas speak from conviction that the Supreme Being propounded by the Vēdas, which are not the work of any man, has taken birth in their community as Śrīkṛṣṇa, the son of Nandagōpa. The strength of the Supreme Phenomenon depends upon the strength of the authority which establishes it. “*Ūttam*” means ‘strength.’ “One who has strength” means “one established on strong authority.” Some say that there can be no standard authority for establishing God’s existence. Some prove His existence by inferential perception. But there is no strength in this argument; because it falls, when a stronger argument or more resourceful guess is advanced to counter it. Vēda alone does not give room for doubt or misconception; it presents true knowledge, even because it is eternal. As it is not the work of any man, it is free from misconceptions and errors naturally associated with the exercise of man’s mind. The Vēda intends to promote the good of mankind; it is unlike the misleading theory of atheism. So in the enunciation of the phenomenon of God, the Vēda alone is the strongest authority. What the Vēda establishes is to be considered as having the strongest foundation. (*Sarvē vēdā yatpada māmananti sarvē Vēdā yatraikam bhavanti*). The gōpikas have understood that Śrīkṛṣṇa is the Adorable; and that the adoration of Śrīkṛṣṇa is the adoration of Śrīmannārāyaṇa, in establishing whom all the Vēdas in their essential teaching are united. This strong phenomenon of Śrīmannārāyaṇa is no doubt enunciated and supported by the Vēdas. But it is, at the same time, beyond the reach of the Vēdas themselves.

3. *Periyāy!*

“You who possess unexcelled dimensions!” In nature, form and attributes, this God-phenomenon is of unexcelled dimen-

sions. The Vēda which has tried to measure the extent of bliss declares: "Yatō vāchō nivartantē aprāpya manasā saha: In reaching which both thought and word failed and turned back." The gōpikas know that Śrīkṛṣṇa Phenomenon is the same Brahma-tattva or God phenomenon, which is far beyond the range of thought and word. "Namō namō vāngmanasāti bhūmayē, namō namō vāngmanasaika bhūmayē: The God-phenomenon is beyond the reach of the mind and of the power of speech. Yet It is to be understood only by the mind and expressed only by the power of speech." It is this idea that the gōpikas express in the words: Ūttamuḍaiyāy Periyāy. If this Phenomenon yields to an authority (i.e. is measured by a standard, however high) It becomes limited. If It does not, It becomes empty. By Its own grace, It submits to authority; at the same time, Its nature and extent are beyond the range of any authority to determine. That is why those who say that they have understood the God-phenomenon really do not know It; and those who say that they have failed to know It, do really know It. The Upaniṣad says:

*"Yasyā matam tasya matam matam yasya navēdasah
Avijnātam vijñātām vijñāta mavijñātām"*

One need not reject that "Paratattvam" in despair as being beyond reach; because the same "Parattva" has manifested Itself tous in a form which can be perceived by the senses." Knowing that Kṛṣṇa is that form, the gōpikas awaken him:

4. *Ulaginil tōṭramāy ninṇa ṣuḍarē tuyile!āy*

O Effulgence! emerging in the world and manifesting as Kṛṣṇa! awake from sleep!

The 'Paratattva,' which is absolute Purity and Effulgence glorying in threefold splendour, descends into the despicable world composed of the three fundamental qualities, the world of bondage to birth, Samsāra. He whose nature is to command becomes a part of the world which He commands; and that too a world of bondage detested by the worldly people themselves. The Supreme who is beyond the reach of thought and word becomes manifest in flesh and blood to the physical eyes of even the common people. He does not, like us, take birth in the world as a result of Karma (Works). He merely manifests Himself when He so

wills: 'Tōṭṛamāy.' He is unaffected by contact with the mean primordial Nature; though He is in it, He is not veiled by it but shines resplendent. The individual self, though essentially of the nature of Knowledge, suffers a diminution in radiance, and gets clouded under the impact of Primal Nature. But the Supreme Self, on the other hand, does not renounce His nature but shines bright even when He is in this world. So the gōpikas address Him: "śuḍare: O form of Effulgence." The Upaniṣad declares: "Sa-U-Śrēyān bhavati jāyamānaḥ: The Supreme Self becomes 'only Śrēya, the good' as He takes birth in the world." Even when the Supreme becomes a human being, He still retains his Supreme-ness. Fools perish by not recognising this supreme-ness in His human form. Those who deserve His grace recognise it and find salvation. The gōpikas know both the aspects—His human-ness and Supreme-ness; they know that Kṛṣṇa who is born as the son of their Nandagōpa, is no other than the ParaBrahma, the Supreme Being, who is propounded by all the Vēdas; and that He is the Effulgence that has become manifest out of His gracious ove for the world. This is how we should think when we worship the Immanent One or His external Image.

'Uttam' means 'determination.' The Supreme Lord shows His steady 'determination' in protecting His suppliants and in keeping His word. He is tenacious in carrying out His pledges to His suppliants, even if, by doing so, He faces the risk of destruction of Himself and of His glory. He will protect those who seek refuge in Him ignoring their shortcomings, even if Śrī Mahālakṣmi bears testimony to their wicked conduct. Śrī Rāma offers protection to Vibhīṣaṇa who seeks it, despite Sugrīva's opposition to it. However much he loves Sugrīva, he ignores his advice that Vibhīṣaṇa who comes from the enemy-camp deserves the punishment of death. When Śrī Rāma is in the Daṇḍaka forest, the Ṛṣis come to him with the request that he should protect them from the torments inflicted on them by the Rākṣasas. Śrī Rāma pledges them protection. Sītadēvi dissuades Rāma from this undertaking, because it involves destruction of Rākṣasas. Then Rāma tells her: "apyaham jīvitam jahyām tvām vā Sītē sa Lakṣmaṇām natu pratijñām samśrutyā Brāhmaṇēbhyaḥ viśeṣataḥ:

I shall forego my life; I shall forego Lakṣmaṇa; I shall forego even you; But O Sīta, I will never give up my pledge." Knowing how

strong and steady He is in his 'determination' to protect His suppliants, the gōpikas address Him as "the one with a resolute will" (Ottamuḍai yāy).

Once Kṛṣṇa makes a promise, he never goes back upon it. Even when he fulfils the wishes of his adherents to the very letter, He feels unhappy that he has not been able to do anything. Such is his greatness. Again, while carrying out the wishes of his suppliants as his own, he does not take into account their low standards; but gives them bounties which are in conformity with his greatness. Hence it is the gōpikas address him as 'Periyāy, great man.' His partiality for his favourites is patent to the whole world his conduct makes it well-known even to his enemies like Śiṣupāla and Duryōdhana. "Ulaginil tōṭṭamāy ninṇa ṣuḍārē." Śiṣupāla takes advantage of the actions done by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the interests of his favourites and publicly denounces him as 'a thief' and 'a prisoner.' Duryōdhana finds occasion to blame him because he has accepted Vidura's hospitality in preference to Duryōdhana's. Kṛṣṇa considers that to be the charioteer of Pārtha and the ambassador of Pāṇḍavas, who are his devoted suppliants, is a proud privilege to be enjoyed. If Kṛṣṇa, after manifesting these great qualities, now ignores the gōpikas and continues sleeping, his qualities like concern and considerateness for his devotees suffer defilement. So they urge him to wake up and receive them, so that these qualities may shine all the brighter. Then Kṛṣṇa wakes up and enquires how they happen to come there.

5. *Māṭṭār unakku valitulaindu un vāṣaṅkaṅ*

*Āṭṭādu vandu unnaḍi paṇiyu māppolē pōṭṭiyām vandōm pugaiṇdu
ēlōrempāvāy*

"In the same way as your enemies, overcome by your superior might, hasten to your home and glorify your feet, we too, unable to restrain a persistent urge, have come to you to sing your benediction."

The gōpikas compare themselves to the enemies of Kṛṣṇa who are subdued by Him. All have the same natural bond with the Supreme Self. But some develop qualities of arrogance and inertia; and, under their influence, violate the injunctions of Vēdas and other scriptural authorities; they defy the Supreme Self and

thus become distant from Him. Thinking always in terms of 'I' and 'mine,' they forget that everything, including themselves, belongs to Him. Such are the enemies. The gōpikas feel that from beginningless time, they have with their egoism perpetrated crimes which even the omniscient God is unable to rectify; and they have thus become distant from Him; so they compare themselves to the enemies of God. It is such people that God has declared as His wicked enemies: *Tānaḥam dviṣataḥ Krūrān*. They are called 'traitors,' as they have disobeyed His orders as propounded in scriptural authorities: *Ājñācchēdī mama drōhī*. He further declares that those who hate His devotees deserve His hatred. Thus God's enemies are (1) those who are filled with egoism, with an overweening sense of 'I' and 'mine' (2) those whose conduct is marked by defiance of the rules and regulations prescribed by scriptural authorities (3) those who hate God's devotees and indulge in their calumny. As these shortcomings are common to all alike, the gōpikas compare themselves to the enemies of God. They have so long been away from Him because they are His enemies. Now they are unable to resist His strong pull and have become submissive and come to His feet. "We are not different from *Hiranyakaśapa* and *Rāvaṇa* of yore. We have committed the same crimes that they have committed—hatred of God and persecution of His devotees. *Rāvaṇa* says that, even if he is to be split into two, he will not bend or yield: *nanamēyam*. During battle, *Rāvaṇa* falls into a miserable plight, with chariot shattered, charioteer dead, horses collapsed and bow split; and *Rāma* gives him leave to depart 'gaccha.' Instead of falling prostrate at the feet of *Rāma*, who is the Refuge of the whole world, *Rāvaṇa* turns and goes back into his city." The gōpikas feel that they too are as wicked as *Rāvaṇa*.

"We are such apostates. In the same way as your enemies submit to your superior mettle, we fall at your feet giving up all efforts of our own, relinquishing all our feelings of 'I' and 'Mine,' and finding no refuge anywhere else. *Kākāsura* commits an outrage on *Sita* by pecking at her bosom and becomes the target of *Rāma*'s *Brahmāstra* (Potent divine shaft).

*'Sa pitrācha parityaktaḥ suraiṣcha samaharṣibhiḥ
Trinlokān samparikramya ta mēva śaraṇam gataḥ.*

Having failed to secure protection anywhere in the three worlds, having found his father and other celestials and great sages powerless to provide him shelter, Kākāsura in sheer despair returns to Śrī Rāma and prays to him to save him from the divine bolt.' We have, likewise, committed grave crimes under the malignant influence of egoism and spirit of possessiveness and tried all ways of self-defence, only to meet with failure. We are overcome by your excellences and come here to slave under you. Kākāsura sought your succour as he could not resist the power of your shaft. We seek refuge in you for a different reason. We are won over by your beauty and goodness, by your easy accessibility and other excellences. Your characteristic attributes are more powerful than your arrows. Your weapons split the bodies, while your attributes split the souls. Your qualities have split our souls and we come to you with broken hearts."

The individual soul should become entirely dependent on the Supreme Self and give up all self-effort to save himself. But is it consistent with the nature of individual self to go in search of the Supreme Soul? Sita does not make any effort to save herself when in Lanka. She clings to the conviction that Rāma will come and save her. The gōpikas too should have remained where they were. But charmed by the beauty and other qualities of Kṛṣṇa, they are unable to resist the urge to go to him, forgetting for the nonce how their action is against their nature. They know that their going to Him is a forbidden act. So they say "We, who should not have come to you, have come." Yām vandōm.

"Your enemies, having suffered defeat at your hands, go to you and glorify your valour with an eye upon their own interests. We, on the other hand, fall under the spell of your accomplishments, and come to you to sing your benediction for your glory. We wish that you should be happy even if we perish. We have come here like the Peri-Ālvār and other Ālvārs, who are renowned for their songs of benediction. Even when their kingdoms are restored to them, the enemies choose to stay on and render service at the Lord's feet. In a similar way, those who reach the feet of Śrīmannārāyaṇa, knowing Him as the Ultimate Possessor of adjunctless selves, refuse to resume the earlier life—which has been marked by self-independence, by a sense of belonging to some

other than God, by an effort at self-protection, by an attachment to close kith and kin, by an involvement in sense-pleasures and by similar other features. They are rather eager to cling to His feet as the ultimate refuge and to stay on singing His benediction.

Thus do the gōpikas make clear to Kṛṣṇa the state in which they have come to him.



PĀŚURAM XXII

PREFACE.

In the previous Pāśuram mention is made of the gōpikas reaching Kṛṣṇa and awakening him with the submission, that they belong to him only and that they find succour at no other place. They compare this conduct to the behaviour of enemies who succumb to superior might. Until the knowledge that he belongs to none else than the Supreme and that, too, to enhance His glory, fully ripens, the self cannot win His favour. The gōpikas have thus revealed their present state that they belong to God and to none else; and that they look up to Him for succour and to none else. They pray that Kṛṣṇa will deign to open his eyes and look at them with favour.

This ritual discloses the way by which individual selves who have unfortunately drifted away from the Supreme can get back to Him and be united with Him. To achieve this, there are certain essential steps to be taken and they have been indicated: association with God's devotees, winning the favour of an āchārya, receiving initiation into a spiritual incantation, meditation on the meaning and significance of the mantra, developing a sense of at-one-ness with the saints, soliciting the goodwill and intercession of Lakṣmi as mediator, and accepting God Himself as the means to attain Him. In this Pāśuram the idea that there is no refuge other than the Lord is further elaborated. Attachment is of two kinds: to think that "everything is mine" is attachment to possessions; to think that "I am this body" and that "I am free and independent" is attachment to the ego. In the previous Pāśuram, the gōpikas have indicated that they have gone to Kṛṣṇa in the same way as enemies who submitting to superior strength seek the grace of the victor, and refusing to be restored to power, stay on rendering services to him. That way, they have freed themselves from attachment to 'possessiveness' (mamakāra). Once a person knows his real self, his feeling of independence vanishes; because he knows that he is entirely dependent on the Supreme. He understands

that he is like a body to the Supreme; and therefore the notion of 'I' takes a new meaning; it signifies God. "Aham" does not mean "I" but "He who is in me." With this, the misconception that "I am independent" disappears; and in its place the conviction that "I am dependent on Him" grows. The spirit of independence yields place to a feeling of humility, of servitude. With this feeling comes the knowledge that the Supreme is the sustenance, the nourishment, and the object to be enjoyed. When this faith is established, His abode becomes a refuge, even if He does not give protection.

Even after a king surrenders all his wealth and other possessions as an offering to God and remains in the temple, the idea that he is a king flickers in his mind. Until this idea is extinguished, he does not understand his own self completely. Until he has full and correct knowledge of his self, God's mercy does not flow towards him. This body itself is the kingdom; and the self is its king. The king thinks that he is ruling the kingdom; likewise, the self thinks that he is protecting the body. By this vain attachment to the possessions, the idea forms that he is independent. It is only when this spirit of freedom and attachment collapses, and the idea that he belongs entirely to God emerges, that he becomes worthy of God's grace; and then his karma declines and he develops intense devotion. Karma, which consists of both meritorious and sinful works, is the obstacle to getting a vision of the Lord. This obstacle can be removed only by His mercy. The process of achieving this liberation has already been indicated. Attachment should yield place to knowledge that he belongs to God and to no other; and that he is to be enjoyed by God and by no other; and then he must seek refuge in Him only, as there is no other succour; then he deserves to receive God's grace; and at that stage emerges deep devotion culminating in the vision of the Lord. The gōpikas reach this stage today and become worthy of Kṛṣṇa's grace, become free from the bondage of Karma, become fit to enjoy eternal union with Kṛṣṇa.

They have said that they have no other refuge. Kṛṣṇa waits to see whether they go away, if protection is not forthcoming; or remain there, protection or no protection. The gōpikas then declare that they have none else to look up to and that they will have to stay there, shelter or no shelter. "We are not independent

by ourselves; we do not belong to others; we are not to be enjoyed by others. So we have come to you. You must show mercy and give us protection."

When Vibhīṣaṇa goes to Rāma to seek protection, he declares first that he has left Lanka: *Parityaktā mayā Lankā*; and then that he has also left his wife and children behind: *Tyaktvā putrūṇ-ścha dārāṇścha*. When his own brother Rāvaṇa, with whom he shares his blood, has behaved so cruelly towards him, where is the guarantee that his wife and children will not behave the same way? So, he has left all who have any connection with Rāvaṇa. When all diverse relationships with varying persons and objects and all types of happiness are to be found in Śrī Rāma, why not renounce everything else? Such is his way of thinking. Finally, he makes the submission: "*Bhavadgatam mē rājyamcha jīvitamcha dhanānicha*: O Rāma, you are everything to me, my kingdom, my life and my wealth. If you do not give me protection, I have no other place to go, no other person to approach." Such an attitude is necessary when approaching God; we must relinquish all other relationships and feel that we totally belong to Him and to no other. The gōpikas make the submission that they are to be enjoyed by Kṛṣṇa alone and by no other.

*Aṅgaṇ māñālattaraṣar abhimāna
baṅgamāy vandu ninpaḷḷikkaṭṭil kīḷe
śaṅgamiruppārpōl vandu talaippeydōm
kiṅgiṇivāycceyda tāmaraippūppōlē
śeṅgaṇṣiricciṇide yemmēl viḷiyāvō
tiṅgaḷumādittiyanu meḷundārpōl
aṅgaṇiraṇḍuṅkoṇḍu eṅgaḷmēlnōkkkudiyēl
eṅgaḷmēl śāpaminḷdelō rempāvāy*

Summary.

In the same way as kings, who have ruled over vast stretches of beautiful domains, give up their arrogance that there is none more powerful than they, and assemble in groups before the throne of the conquering Emperor, we too have gathered in large numbers beneath your seat of glory, with our egoism fully shattered. Open

slowly and gradually your eyes, which resemble the lotus that is slightly open like the lips of a small bell, and which are tinged red with your gracious love for us. Do direct your kind glance upon us. Should your two eyes, which appear like the sun and the moon rising simultaneously on the sky, direct looks towards us, even the curse-like karma, which we are condemned to endure, will leave us of its own accord.

Commentary.

1. *Aṅgaṇ mānālattaraṣar abhimāna baṅgamāy vandu*

“We have come to you in the same way as kings who have reigned over large and beautiful domains appear, denuded of all their pride, before the victor, the Emperor.”

The Supreme Lord has an innate power of command. But the individual selves, moved by empty pride also presume that they are rulers like God, *īśvarōham*; and thus they retain their individuality. The Lord is the Supreme ruler of all elements. *īśvaraḥ sarva-bhūtānām*: but the individual selves in their egoism behave as though they are no less powerful. While the Supreme is naturally the Lord of the whole universe, the worldly princes rule as though the kingdoms are theirs. Only the possessor will have independence. What he possesses will be dependent upon him. The individual selves are the property of the Supreme Self. He alone is the Lord. But the individual selves imagine that they are themselves independent lords. They are like women and are dependants; the Supreme alone is *Puruṣha* and is independent. Giving up dependence, which is natural to woman, and assuming independence, constitutes *abhimāna*, conceited sensitiveness. The *gōpikas* have distanced themselves from the Lord under the influence of conceited sensitiveness. But now they return to him realising how entirely dependent they are on him. They compare themselves to the kings who, cured of their pride, turn submissive to the Emperor. Kings imagine that the beautiful and extensive domains are their own. They are ignorant that the Lord designs the things that are to be enjoyed, and the places where they are to be enjoyed, and the senses which are the means or the instruments through which they are to be enjoyed; and that He allots them to the individual selves according to the merit of their works. All living beings from the small ant to the creator *Brahma*, presume that

whatever falls within their range belongs to them; and this egoism is the same for all. Brahma imagines that all that comes under his extensive jurisdiction is his and feels proud. It is unfortunate that proper recognition is not given to the fact that the positions held by the several individuals have come to them by their accumulated merit and by the grace of God. Within its narrow limits, the ant feels that it owns the little that it has and thinks that it is enjoying what it has earned by its own effort. Thus from Brahma to the ant, presumptuousness and egoism are common, though their degree varies. And only when these are struck down can they approach the Supreme. This egoism "aham" is the cause of all grief; the larger it grows, the greater the ensuing grief. All the objects to which the individual self develops fond attachment turn to be nails to fasten griefs tightly to his heart.

*Yāvataḥ kurutē jantuḥ sambandhān manasaḥ priyān
Tāvantōsya nikhanyantē hṛdayē śōka śankavaḥ.*

The scriptures declare that even immortals like Brahma who after many births could, by God's grace, reach their exalted positions, attain the highest end of liberation, only when, by steady penance, they overcome their egoism with the blessing of God. Still there are some ordinary people without any position and without any spiritual discipline, who feel confident that after they shed the mortal coil they are certain to attain the highest end. How could that be? When immortals like Brahma cannot attain liberation unless they pass through the arduous discipline of penance, how can a common mortal attain it with such ease? To this Śrī Bhaktar has given an adequate answer. Brahma aspires for liberation by offering all that he has to God; but as his possessions are so large and so many, it takes an unconscionably long time for him to complete the process of surrender. But the ordinary man whose possessions are of no consequence, entertains, from the very beginning, the belief that all that he has is God Himself. So he has nothing to offer Him; there is nothing that he can or need do. As he has all along believed that God is All-in-all and has laid all his burdens at His feet, God takes up the entire responsibility. So he has no worry; and he attains liberation after death immediately. Brahma feels attached to a very large number of interests; and so it takes time for him to give up all of them. He is capable of action and so he has to choose his implements. But the ordinary

person has very little and so he gives it up in no time. Moreover, as he cannot act by himself, he clings to God as the only means; and thus earns liberation with ease.

Kings presume that they and their large kingdoms are one. Imitating the Lord of the Universe, "Paṭim viśvasya," the kings presume that they too are lords of the universe. Imitating Vāsu-dēva, Paundraka has presumed that he is equal to Him and assumed the title "Vāsudēva" and held in his hands the conch and the disc. That is how the puny kings conduct themselves. What the kingdom is to the king, that the body and wealth, wife and children are to the common individual selves. Until after the attachment to them and the spirit of independence are eliminated, the knowledge that they belong to God does not dawn on them. In the same way as the kings, humbled by reverses and loss of kingdom, approach the Emperor, the gōpikas giving up the egoistic sensitiveness of their sex (Strītvābhimāna) approach Kṛṣṇa.

"Rājyam nāma mahāvṛyādhiḥ achikitsō vināśanaḥ:

'Dominion' is an incurable disease which brings about total destruction." The egoism it promotes the while it is enjoyed, and the humiliation it causes when it is lost, appear quite peculiar and strange. So Nammālvār suggests not to rely on it but seek succour in Śrīmannārāyaṇa. A particular person, who has ruled as king at one time, loses his kingdom. But he has somehow to find food for his body. But his egoistic sensitiveness that he has once been a king there, comes in his way; and he gives up begging for alms during daytime. As he goes on his rounds receiving alms during night, he stumbles on a black dog that has lain across the way with its brood. The enraged dog bites him on the leg and the earthen pot in the king's hand crashes to the ground. This commotion attracts people to the spot; they come there with lights and discover their erstwhile ruler. With that his self-respect receives a severe rebuff. Nammālvār cautions people not to identify themselves with their possessions. Possessiveness results in grief; so he tells them to seek refuge in Śrīmannārāyaṇa. The sages are of opinion that for a king to develop attachment to the kingdom as his own is fraught with evil. It is fortunate that a king whose egoism has suffered humiliation goes to the soul-inspiring presence of the Lord, instead of repairing to a forest in despair to perish. The gōpikas are women. It is indeed fortunate that

those women give up their attachment to the sensitive feeling of femininity and proceed to Lord Kṛṣṇa's presence, overcoming the hesitation that it is improper for women to go to a man by themselves. All souls by nature owe servitude to the Supreme Soul. He alone is the King. All the souls are His possessions, and He is the only possessor. *Svatyamātmani samjātam svāmitvam Brahmani stitam Dāsabhūtāḥ svatassarvēhyātmānaḥ paramātmanaḥ.*

Souls which do not have powers of possession and lordship presume that they have both; and this presumption constitutes conceited sensitiveness. It is only when this abhimāna is displaced by the emergence of their natural privilege of servitude, that souls can reach the presence of the Supreme. The gōpikas have reached the stage when their self-conceit is struck down; and knowledge that they belong to Kṛṣṇa as his possessions has dawned upon them. So they come to him, realising that their natural right is to serve him.

2. *Nin Paṭṭikkattil kīlē śaṅgamiruppār pōl vandu talaippey dōm*

“ We have come in groups like the defeated kings, and gathered under your couch.”

Defeated kings, with their prestige lost, gather before the throne of the victorious Emperor. But the gōpikas do not mention the throne, but only the couch of Kṛṣṇa; meaning thereby, that the proper shelter for all whose egoism suffers a crushing blow is Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is the only Refuge, and none else. When all the splendour of the Universe is but an infinitesimal part of the Supreme Lord, it is only natural for it to return to Him who possesses it. The people, whoever they be and whatever harm hits them, have to go to the king to submit their representation of grievances. As the Supreme Lord is the King of kings, the gōpikas slide under His couch and prove that they belong to Him only and to none else. Should the King of kings restore the kingdoms to the defeated kings, they decline the offer, recalling to their minds the previous humiliation and express their reluctance to leave their present place of shelter. They aspire to occupy the foremost place among the people, gathered there for shelter and service. They are afraid that if they move away from the Lord and wander in the distance, people may take them to be free and independent, and re-install them on the thrones. Again,

if they are found in isolation, people may believe that they are still kings. So they are reluctant to leave the couch of the Lord, and wish to be found together in company there. The Bhagavad-gita exhorts people, who have overcome the feeling that the body and the self are identical and that they are independent, to give up the desire for company; *aratiṁ janasamsadi*: Why then should they still entertain the desire to be found in company? They may well cultivate isolation. But their fear is that if they are found, each by himself in isolation, some unthinking relation may embarrass them by accosting them as 'kings.' Let us take the case of Bharata, a devotee of Rāma. Bharata does not aspire for kingship, and even when he rules as deputy he does not have any attachment to kingship. But when he is alone, his mother Kaikēyī addresses him as 'King'; and unable to endure the title, he falls down, shocked, in a swoon. As Bharata is away from the presence of Rāma, all people doubt his good faith. Both Guha and Bharadvāja suspect the purity of his motives; and question him, entertaining doubts whether he is going into the woods to do harm to Śrī Rāma with his eye on the kingdom. Bharata has to reassure all, time and again, that he has no such evil in him. Lakṣmaṇa who has never left Śrī Rāma's presence is spared such insinuating comments. That is why, the gōpikas wish to remain in groups under the shelter of Kṛṣṇa's couch.

They feel surprised how they have managed to reach the couch, which people, whose only connection is with Kṛṣṇa, and with no other, are allowed to reach as worthy of rendering to him devoted personal services in private. By their attachment to body which they have identified with the soul, they have for long drifted away from the Supreme and even forgotten their natural kinship with Him. Their wonder is how they have, without any ostensible reason, managed to approach His presence that day. When we think of how these sentient beings who have eternal kinship with Him have drifted away from Him and how they have toiled hard to get back to Him, we are shaken with wonder how they have overcome the near impossibility of their regaining their former position. Though the sentient beings are separate entities, they will not and cannot exist aloof from the Supreme, in the same way as species (Jāti) and qualities (guṇas) cannot exist separately from entities (dravya). The gem Kaustubha adds to the beauty

of the Supreme and thus justifies its existence. Similarly, living beings should, by their various activities, contribute to the glory of the Supreme. Individual selves, which have inherently such inseparable connection with the Supreme, forget their kinship under the influence of the beginningless Karma and forge close links with the body; till, at last, they come to identify themselves with the insentient body. The divine and human elements, which combine in man and which belong to the body, are mistakenly appropriated by them. They feel that they are men and at times gods. Joys and sorrows which emanate out of the connection with the insentient body are accepted and experienced, as though they are the consequences of their own actions. Under the belief that they are the doers (Kartas) and that they are the people enjoying pleasures or enduring sorrows (bhōktas), they develop egoism which cuts them off from God altogether. Getting disgusted with their impertinent egoism, the Lord too hurls them away (Kṣipāmi) to a long distance from Him. The individual self, who is thus thrown adrift, becomes worthy of God's grace by some casual good deed, not deliberately done by him. From that grace of God, the knowledge dawns on him that the body is not the soul, that the soul which is different from the body is perennial, while the body is evanescent. He knows the real nature of self and gives up his attachment to the body. He knows that the self is not independent and that it belongs to the Lord. And then he develops a taste for God who alone is worthy to be attained. Learning that He is the only means to attain Him, he seeks His goodwill. Despite his attempts to win His favour, he may fail to earn it; and this failure only quickens his eagerness to attain Him. Urged by this unquenchable thirst for Him, he moves towards His feet, unable to bear separation from Him. The individual self who has so long been cut off from God re-approaches Him with true knowledge and penitence. This is symbolised by the example of a king, who has drifted away from the Emperor on account of his attachment to the kingdom, getting defeated and humbled and returning to the throne of the Emperor. The son of an Emperor, who has strayed away from home as a child, is brought up by a hunter; and the child cultivates the habits and the ways of the hunter. Learning providentially that he is not a tribal but an Emperor's son, he returns to his father's home. Similar is the case with the individual selves returning to the Supreme Self; similar is the case with humiliated kings turning up at the Emperor's

throne; similar is the re-union established by the gōpikas with Lord Kṛṣṇa. Drifting through different births from times immemorial, the gōpikas have so suddenly and unexpectedly reached the feet of the Supreme; and hence their wonder. It is a miracle when two such disparate objects, which seldom unite, come together so unaccountably and suddenly. Bharata is trying to locate Śrī Rāma's abode in the woods; he is following the directions of Bharadvāja in his search. While roaming in the forest, he feels suddenly that he has reached the destination and is overpowered with joy. He does not reach that place because he knows the way and deliberately walks in that direction. It looks as though he happens to find himself at the destination during his rambles. The gōpikas find no means of reaching Kṛṣṇa; they cannot keep away from him; and as they go about making a search, they happen to come to the place where he is.

It is a miracle how contact has been established between the man Rāma and the monkeys like Hanumān and Sugrīva. Sīta enquires Hanumān how this strange thing has happened: *Vānarāṇām narāṇāmcha kathamāsitsamāgamaḥ*. Hanumān describes how this contact has come about and winds up with the remark: "dēvyēvaṁ samajāyata: that the contact has become so close that a monkey has been chosen as fit to carry Rāma's message to you, a lady of the palace." It is unnatural for human beings and monkeys, two different species, to unite; and their miraculous union therefore evokes surprise. The gōpikas feel the same wonder and excitement at the miraculous contact of the Supreme and the individual selves. The gōpikas then explain the purpose with which they have gone there.

3. *Kiṅgiṇi vāyccēyda tāmaraippūppōlēṣeṅgaṇṣiricciṇḍē*
yemmēl vḷḷiyāvō

"Won't you direct your looks on us by gradually opening your red eyes which resemble the lotuses, half-open like the lips of a small bell?"

They pray that he should gradually look at them with half-open eyes. They cannot stand the glare of his eyes if they are open fully and suddenly. The fruit of their labour in reaching him is to become worthy of his gracious looks. They institute a comparison to show how those eyes should be. They should

resemble not the full blown lotus, but the slowly-blossoming lotus, which resembles the lips of a small bell. The bell has a small stone placed in it in such a way that it is visible from outside but does not fall down. The half-open lotus resembles it, in that the bee within it is visible, but it does not come out. The gōpikas desire that Kṛṣṇa should look at them with eyes resembling the lips of the small bell and the half-open lotus. They wish to feast upon the beauty of his half-open eyes with the dark pupils visible and with red rays radiating from them. The reason why his eyes are half-open is explained thus: When the Supreme finds before Him people who have sinned, His stern independence resents looking at them; and His eyes consequently close. But Nīlādēvi who is just beside Him moves Him with the appeal that the erring souls deserve mercy and not resentment, and thus stirs His graciousness. With that, His eyes open partially. While the sins committed by Jīvas, sentient beings, provoke Him to shut His eyes, His attribute of tolerating them urges Him to open His eyes. As a Judge, the Supreme has to dispense the fruits strictly according to the merit of their works (Karma); and there is no scope for mercy in it. And this thought of adherence to the criteria of works done, as the sole basis for the dispensation of justice, makes Him to close His eyes. But then His considerateness for those who seek refuge in Him urges Him to be partial to them and to protect them, whatever be their sins and however wicked they may be. And so He opens His eyes. The influence of Time keeps His eyes closed, as people have to wait till the time is ripe to yield fruits to them. But their cries of agony are so insistent that God is moved to open His eyes, despite Time's opposition. In the same way as sunlight is responsible for the blooming of the lotus, the cries of agony of the individual selves are the main instrument to make Him open His eyes. On account of the pull of contrary forces, God's eyes remain half-open (neither closed nor open fully) and the gōpikas pray that He should regard them with half-open eyes

There is nothing to compare with the redness of the Lord's eyes. It cannot be likened to the redness of the lotus. The Lord's eyes become red because of His excessive love for the individual selves. How can the lotus claim such redness? The gōpikas seem to explain their sad plight; "We have little strength, and even that little is further depleted by the agony of separation from you. We cannot stand the glare of your looks. So we pray that you

will slowly and gradually direct your looks on us. When a crop is famished by drought, it is fed with water in limited quantities and in a gradual process. Likewise, we who are exhausted by separation from you are to be refreshed with a gradual and steady flow of the stream of your love. A small pond cannot contain the whole ocean; our little hearts cannot contain the ocean of your mercy, should it suddenly flow into us. People who have starved for a long time are fed in dribblets and their powers of digestion are gradually revived. Similarly, open your eyes slowly and gradually, so that we may enjoy your looks at every stage. The *chātaka* birds depend upon the rain-drops for their sustenance; and we depend upon your gracious looks for our nourishment and support; and hence our request that you be pleased to direct them on us slowly and gradually." Individual selves have long suffered separation from God by their identifying themselves with their bodies and by the residual tendencies (*vāsanās*) of beginningless karma. Now, as they return to the presence of the Lord by His unaccountable love, they cannot stand the full splendour of His looks or of His presence. So they request that they may be enabled to enjoy His presence slowly and gradually so as to derive the full benefit of it.

Let us know the stages of this long process of God-realisation. First, the sensitive attachment to the body which is identified with the self must go. Then, the idea that the self is independent must be given up. Next, he must know that he belongs to God and to none else; thereafter, the egoistic tendency, that he has acquired such knowledge (of his being the property of the Supreme) should go. Then, the presumption that he has been rendering services to his Master and Lord should be given up. Instead, he should think that God employs His own dependents as His instruments in activities of His own devising, which are meant to enhance His own glory; and that He is pleased with them. Thus he comes to know that he is the property of God; and that God Himself will take care of His property. He thus gives up all efforts to protect himself. And then he discovers that God is the only means to attain Him and so gives up all other means of reaching Him. He cultivates a strong, abiding conviction that nothing else but He can be an effective instrument to attain Him. In all the activities that he undertakes, he learns that he has no independence or freedom. When he knows that all his activities are

subject to the control of the Supreme, his egoism that he is the doer disappears; and he develops the humility of a dependant. Then he must experience the glory of all the auspicious attributes of the Supreme. With that experience, *he* develops love for God and consecrates all his activities as services to God. Care should be taken to avoid the feeling that *he* is enjoying bliss on account of his dedicated services. He must think that these activities are meant to please God, to make His face bloom. With this, the idea that *he* is enjoying bliss vanishes. In this way the self which has identified himself with the body progresses to the stage when he becomes filled with loving devotion to God. He owes this ripe and perfect state entirely to God's grace. It is God's grace alone that flows gradually towards all individual selves, and breaks their egoism and attachments and purifies them and turns them into devotees of God. The gōpikas pray that Kṛṣṇa may shower his grace on them and turn them into perfect devotees. Should he deign to grant their prayer, the result that follows is described by them thus:

4. *Tiṅgaḷum ādittiyanum etundārpōl aṅgaṅ iranḍuṅkoṇḍu*
eṅgaḷ mēl nōkhudiyēl eṅgaḷ mēl śāpamiḷindu ēlōrempāvāy.

“O Lord, should you open wide your beautiful eyes, which are like the sun and the moon springing up in the middle of the sky, and look at us, all the acute distress necessarily experienced by us in our separation from you will come to an end, and yield place to bliss.”

Sunlight chases darkness and gives warmth. Moonlight purveys happiness to the mind. The sun and the moon are the eyes of the Supreme Being, and if they cast their looks in our direction, the darkness of ignorance will be shattered. All the forces of antagonism and hostility perish under their blaze. Our joy knows no limits. The looks appear mellow to those oriented towards Him and so they approach Him and feel happy. The looks appear fiery to those who are hostile, and forbid their approach and destroy them. The burning dazzle of the sun and the refreshing coolness of the moon combine in the Lord's looks; and when they are directed on us, the fears that we may be missing the fruit of realisation and that we may not be rid of the agony of separation

are dispelled. We feel relieved of the anguish, and enjoy perfect happiness. "*Chandramā manaso jātaḥ Chakṣo sūryō ajāyata:* The moon emerged from the mind and the sun from the eye of the Supreme." Thus it is that the moon has acquired the coolness of the Supreme's mind and the sun the fire in His eye. While that is the case, how is it that the sun and the moon are referred to as the two eyes of the Supreme? The gōpikas feel hurt that the sun and the moon who are subject to changes of growth and diminution and who are liable to persecution by Rāhu and Kētu, should be brought into comparison with their Lord's eyes. And so they describe his eyes as "*aṅgaḥ*: charming eyes" and appeal to him: "Look at us with your fascinating eyes. They will find how badly we need them. Direct your blaze on those who obstruct us from reaching you, and your loving glances on us, in the same way as you did once display your fiery prowess on Hiranyakaśapa and your gracious love on Prahlāda simultaneously." The lioness fiercely fights with an opposing lioness, while at the same time she suckles the young cubs with love. The gōpikas desire that Kṛṣṇa should destroy their enemies with his valour; and simultaneously shower his love upon them. They further declare "Who are we to demand that you should direct your loving looks on us? It is not our eager longing for the gracious looks that counts. We cannot get them by ourselves. If only you think that we deserve your gracious looks and then direct them towards us, we shall benefit by them. Our distress, which like a curse has got to be endured, will then dissipate and disappear to our great relief." The only grief that troubles the gōpikas is that they have not been able to attain Lord Kṛṣṇa. And that grief will come to an end when they receive the Lord's favour. They regard the grief of separation as a curse; and that curse cannot be set at naught except by His gracious favour. Rudra is unable to get rid of Brahma's curse until the Supreme Self is pleased to remove it with a drop of sweat from His bosom. When Rudra strikes off one of the heads of Brahma, it sticks to his hand. It drops down only when a drop of sweat from Viṣṇu's bosom is sprinkled on it. Dūrvasa curses Indra that he will be bereft of all his wealth and prosperity. That curse is made ineffective when Viṣṇu persuades Lakṣmi, who has established herself on His bosom, to direct her gracious looks on Indra. The curse that Gautama pronounces on Ahalya gets nullified by the dust off

the feet of Śrī Rāma. Dakṣa is freed from the curse by a bath in a pond. The gōpikas wish to have all these remedies to become free from the curse of grief caused by their separation from Śrī-kṛṣṇa: "We wish to serve you when you become tired in sport and get drenched with sweat. The gracious looks of the Divine Mother who is inseparably united with you should be directed on us. The dust off your feet should rest on our heads. You should join us in sport in lakes; and we must have a dip in the pond together here and now."



PĀŚURAM XXIII

PREFACE

“ Having no other refuge, we have come to seek shelter in you. Do show us mercy! ”: Śrīkṛṣṇa is deeply stirred by this appeal of the gōpikas. He feels distressed that while it is obligatory for him to rescue at once those who seek his favour through Nīlādēvi, he has, by his indifference, driven them to a humiliating petition for his mercy as the only succour left. He regrets this lapse- The Ṛṣis approach Rāma in Daṇḍaka forest and request him to rescue them from the persecution of the Rākṣasas. “Hṛī rēṣāhi mamātulā yadīdṛṣai raḥam viprai rupasthēyai rupasthitaḥ.” Then Rāma feels ashamed of his lapse. As king, it is his duty to have gone to them and made enquiries about their needs and brought them comfort by providing them relief from troubles. Instead, by his indifference and neglect, he has made it necessary for the Ṛṣis to approach him with an appeal for protection. So he feels very much upset. And Kṛṣṇa feels the same misery when the gōpikas make their piteous appeal. “Alas! I should have myself gone to their homes and made them happy. Instead, I have remained indifferent when the girls have spent a sleepless night and suffered the anguish of separation from me. They have moved from house to house, not minding the mire nor the dew, awakened their companions, and reaching my house, rouse the Guard and the Watch, obtain my father’s permission, earn my mother’s goodwill, make obeisance to my brother, seek the good offices of Nīlādēvi and approach me for shelter. And all the while, I see their misery and yet remain unconcerned! How unjust and cruel of me! As Rāma, I felt deeply moved when Ṛṣis, who were seasoned men, approached me for protection. And now as Kṛṣṇa, how unfair I remain unmoved when weak women walk to me in anguish!” Kṛṣṇa is unhappy and enquires the gōpikas what he can do for them. The gōpikas are reluctant to express their hearts’ longing in private. They wish that he will examine their request in public, in the council-chamber. Their main desire is to gaze on his beauty. They have seen how handsome he is when asleep. They witness the radiance of his eyes as they have slowly unfolded themselves. Having seen his beauty in the lying posture, they are eager to see what charm exudes from him as he

walks and sits. So they request him to rise and walk up to his throne; and being seated on it, to listen to their prayer and grant it. This pāṣuram elucidates how Kṛṣṇa is to rise and come out. He is compared to a lion crouching in the den.

In this ritual, the progress of the gōpikas so far has reached the stage of realising their own selves. Coming into contact with godly souls, they have earned the goodwill of an ācārya and obtained from him initiation into an incantation and cultivated its meaning; then learning that they belong to saints, they are beholden to them; finally, they realise that through the influence of the mediator, Lakṣmi, they are to accept Kṛṣṇa as the only means of attaining him. They now know that they belong to him only and to none else; that it is irrelevant to equate the self with the body; or to think of independence for the self. With this knowledge, they earn fitness to receive the grace of God which, in turn, helps to intensify their devotion to Him.

What they have to understand now through their worship is, that there is the Original Cause, and that contemplation on It leads to the knowledge that the whole universe is Its manifestation in form. In the result, Cause and Effect are one and the same. This is true philosophy. This is the secret of the Upaniṣad-teaching. The devotees of Viṣṇu have to achieve primarily this objective; of removing ill-will from the world and of promoting love among all. This objective world is neither true nor permanent. Names and forms which are externally visible are fleeting. But the essential root of all is the same, whether in the subtle state of Cause or in the gross stage of Effect. What we find in the gross visible world is the insentient Primordial substance; and behind it and enlivening it, is the subtle sentient self; and permeating the self is the Supreme who remains immanent in it. As the Supreme Self is the essential soul of all, the individual self and the primordial substance cannot sustain without Him. In fact, they can exist, only when they are with Him. So the Supreme Phenomenon is unique; It is an inseparable whole. Before creation, It is known as the Cause; and after creation, It is known as the Effect. Before creation, the primordial substance remains an insentient inchoate mass without any distinction of name and form. So it appears non-existent. But in its subtle essence it resides, merged along with the self, in the Supreme Self. When the Supreme Self so

wills, the Primordial substance undergoes changes during creation and emerges as the world of form and name. Behind this visible world lies the self; and permeating the self is the immanent Supreme. Thus the universe which is the Effect is none else than the Cause which is the Supreme in whom the self and gross elemental nature abide.

The Supreme, in whom both the primordial nature and the self inhere in a subtle form is the Causal Phenomenon. Viśiṣṭādvaita consists in knowing that the Cause and the Effect are the same phenomenon of the Supreme Self. “*Tattvamasi*” inculcates this principle of oneness. The gōpikas pray that they may be enabled to understand this oneness of cause and effect. Once this oneness is realised, on whatever object our looks are cast, a train of thought emerges, which takes us to the Supreme even because every object is instinct with God. In this process, all the reactions that normally result from external differences in name and form, such as hatred and jealousy disappear; and they yield place to love. That is why the gōpikas desire that Kṛṣṇa should come out and be seated on the throne, and consider their hearts’ longing. The lion that lies shrivelled up in the den shakes its body, stretches its limbs and then comes out. While in the cave, the lion is hardly visible; but when it emerges from it, it appears quite considerable. The Causal-Phenomenon (*Kāraṇa tattva*) in which are merged Nature (*Prakṛti*) and Self (*Jiva*) in their subtlest essence is the Supreme Śrīmannārāyaṇa, the lion in the den. The Effect-Phenomenon (*Kāryatattva*) in which Nature takes a gross form and the Self is merged in its fleeting changes and the Supreme permeates the whole as the Immanent One, is again the Supreme Śrīmannārāyaṇa, the lion that has come out of the den. In the same way as Kṛṣṇa, who has lain on the couch within, comes out and occupies the throne, the Causal Phenomenon within, stirs and takes shape as the Universe without. Until this secret is known, it is not possible to understand the essential nature of the Supreme Nārāyaṇa. Unless His essential nature is grasped, there is no scope for perfect love to emerge. Arjuna’s devotion gets firmly established when he is blessed with the vision of the Lord enfolding the entire universe within Himself. Likewise, the love of the gopikas for Kṛṣṇa becomes full and ripō, with their understanding of his essential nature. Apart from

this philosophical aspect, we see how in the temples the utsava-mūrtis move out from the *sanctum sanctorum* and seated on their thrones accept the offerings at the festivals. Those who worship the Immanent One rouse the Power of consciousness (*chaitanya śakti*) lying at the base of the pelvis (*mūlādhāra*) and bring it to the heart-centre (*hṛdaya nāḍi*) and worship it there. Thus the gōpikas' ritual has manifold applications—to the Supreme Phenomenon, to the glorious incarnations, to the Adorable images and to the Immanent One.

Māri malai mūlañcil mannikkīḍanduraṅgum
śīriya siṅgam arivittu ttiviḷittu
vērimayirpoṅga veppāḍum perndudaṛi
mūrinimirndu mūlaṅgi ppuṛappaṭṭu
pōdarumāpōlē; nīpūvaippūvaṇṇā! un
kōyil ninṛiṅganē pōndaruḷi, kōppuḍaiya
śīriyasīṅgāsanatīrundu yāmvanda
kāriyamārāyndaṛuḷē lōrempāvāy.

Summary.

After lying still in a mountain-cave without any stir for a pretty long rainy season, the valiant lion awakens, directs his furious glances here and there, pricks up the smelling hair, rolls his body on all sides and shakes it violently, stretches himself forward and backward, roars, and emerges from the den. Likewise do thou, whose body-tint resembles that of the Atasi flower, walk out of your mansion and ascend your magnificent throne that has unique associations; and then give ear to our humble supplication.

Commentary.

1. *Māri malai mūlañcil mannikkīḍanduraṅgum śīriyasīṅgam:*

"Come out of your mansion in the same way as the lion, that has long lain asleep in his mountain-den during the rainy season, emerges."

The monsoon is an important season for kings and poets, for lonely lovers and yōgis or anchorites. During this season of four months, the wandering mendicants (Yatis) stay at a suitable place and become fully engrossed in contemplation of God (*Chāturmāsa dīkṣa*). Lovers, who are separated, find distance

unendurable and long for union. The prevalence of the clouds provides inspiration to poets; and their poetic talents receive a great fillip for expression. Kings suspend their martial exploits for this season. Ups and downs in the levels of the roads are hidden under sheets of rain-waters. Enmities lie low and seem to have disappeared. During this season, Śrīmannārāyaṇa goes into yōgic sleep in His Heavenly Abode (Vaikunṭha). Lions give up hunting of their prey, withdraw into their dens with their mates, and enjoy sound sleep. Śrī Rāma who is feeling the anguish of separation from Sita manages to help Sugrīva by putting an end to Vāli; but as the monsoon intervenes, he has to spend time with Lakṣmaṇa in a cave of the Mālyavat mountain, forgetting for the nonce his hostility to Rāvaṇa. Sugrīva has the kingdom and wife restored to him in this season; and indulging in amorous sport he goes to the extent of forgetting his pledge to Rāma. Seeing the rows of clouds spreading over the sky, Rāma thinks of his distant spouse and falls into miserable grief. Renowned poets like Vālmiki, Kālidāsa and Sūdraka have poured their poetic genius into their descriptions of the season. The cloud which yields rain is invested with life by Kālidāsa and imaginatively presented as a messenger of love in his poem, Mēghadūta. This is the season when the clouds, formed by the vapours sucked by the sun in summer, disburden themselves in showers of rain. This season marks the period of four months of transition from summer to winter. This season contributes to the happiness of people by facilitating rich harvests and abundant milk-products. This is the external glory of rain. There is another kind of rain which we experience within ourselves; and this is described by Śrī Yāmunāchārya thus:

*“Avivēka ghanāndha ṅgmukhē bahuthā santata duḥkha darṣiṇī
Bhagavān bhava durdinē pathaḥ skalttam mā mavalōka yāchuta”.*

Ignorance is the cloud that prevents us from knowing the difference between the body and the self. In the darkness caused by the cloud of ignorance, the self wanders adrift, not knowing the direction in which to go. This cloud, Ignorance, rains an endless shower of griefs. Bondage to Non-self, Samsāra, is the daytime which is covered with darkness in the monsoon. The gōpikas seem to feel that they are like people who drift in heavy rain, not knowing where to go and how to go. They pray to the Lord to take pity on them and show them the way of relief.

There is another shower, unique in itself. It is the shower of God's grace, arising from the waves of the ocean of His mercy and wafted by the wind of pity. This is the shower that saves us.

All these different types of showers are indicated by the season described here. As the sentient beings drift on the sea of the bondage to birth (Samsāra), God rescues them out of His abundant pity. It is again out of His mercy that He creates, maintains and dissolves. Both creation and dissolution are acts of His mercy. At the time of dissolution, the Supreme draws the whole universe into Himself; and Himself fills all space so that no object can be outside Him; and then goes to sleep. This universal dissolution is like the rain; all selves without any distinction of high or low nestle close to Him. Then the Supreme shines in the caves of the Vēdas, and does not manifest Himself in the visible world. Before creation, there is nothing that can be shown as existing outside Him; as a result, He alone is deemed to exist. "*Sa dēvasōmyēdamagra āsīdekamēvādvitīyam.*" Like the lion in the den, He lies in the Vēdic cave; that is, according to the Upaniṣads, He is in a state that is far beyond the reach of our understanding; and this condition prevails till He chooses to manifest Himself again as the gross world recognisable by name and form.

Dharma is the Supreme Self Himself. Dharma is the means that brings about 'progress' (abhyudaya), and also an 'eternal state of security,' (niṣrēya). The happiness that is attained in this world and other celestial regions comes under 'Progress.' 'The state of security' is enjoyed when the self nestles close to the Supreme and remains there eternally without a moment's separation from Him. For attaining either of these states, the instrument is the Supreme Himself. This is the philosophic truth that is expounded by all the Vēdas. As it is very subtle and abstruse, it cannot be understood easily. That is why, it is said that this Dharmatattva is treasured in a cave: "*Dharmasya tattvam nihitam guhāyām*"; and that this Dharma that good people hanker after, is very subtle and extremely difficult to understand: *Sūkṣmaḥ parama durjñeyaḥ satām dharmah.* The Vēdas appear as mountains to sage Bharadvāja. The Supreme Phenomenon lies hidden in those Vēdic mountains so that none can find it out without an arduous effort.

The lion lies asleep in his den during the rainy season; and it looks as though he will not rise at all. Likewise, the Supreme lies still after dissolution; so still, that doubts arise whether He exists at all; and if He does, whether He will re-manifest Himself in the form of the world. That is why the Vēdas also speak of Him as "Is" and "Is not". As He is not seen manifesting Himself as the world with forms and names, it looks as though He is not; and so is known as *Asat*. But as He takes the subtle invisible form of Cause, He is; and so is *Sat*. At the time of dissolution, the Supreme absorbs the whole universe and lies still. The world of sentient and insentient beings becomes the food of the Supreme Self. 'Simha' means that which causes 'himsa'. The Lion is so called because he hurts. The Supreme harms the world and deprives it of forms and names at the time of dissolution; and so He is a lion. As this lion of Causal phenomenon can be reached only by sound, He appears to be lying in mountain-caves. Again, this lion shines with valour. So even when He is asleep, He causes fright; and so none dare approach Him. On one occasion, when ŚrīRāma is lying asleep resting his head upon Sita's lap, a crow comes and pecks at Sita's bosom; and blood flows forth, Then Sita awakens Rāma: "*Sa mayā bōdhitāḥ Śrīmān sukha sūptāḥ parantapaḥ*: By me has been awakened Śrī Rāmā who, even when asleep, suffers no diminution in beauty and retains his valour which frightens his enemies". *Sukhasūptāḥ parantapaḥ* Even when sound asleep, Rāma's valour is said to cause fright to his enemies. Likewise here: *Siriya singam*; it is indicated that this lion, though in sleep, does not lose a whit of his valour. Even in the state of dissolution and also before creation, the Supreme Self is not bereft of His attributes; all His auspicious qualities such as strength and power, Effulgence and Sovereignty lie concealed in Him as Immanent Force; only they are not outwardly manifested or expressed. Again *Siriya singam* (the valiant lion) is to be understood as being accompanied by Lakṣmi. The lion in the den is not alone; he is with the lioness. But they do not appear as two; they cohere so close that they appear as one. Thus though Nārāyaṇa is the phenomenon before creation, He cannot be shown as separate from Lakṣmi Nārāyaṇa; so inseparably do Lakṣmi and Nārāyaṇa cohere in that state.

2. *Arivittuttiṭṭu, vēṭmayir poṅga*:—

"The lion has awakened and stared intently, while his fragrant hair has stood on end."

The lion has awakened, not because some one has roused him, not because he has feared an attack. He has risen of his own accord. Similarly, the Supreme Self rises from yōgic sleep, because He knows the time has come to create the world. There is none who can awaken Him. The flower blooms when the appropriate time comes. It is thus with the Supreme also. He wakes up when the time comes. And what has all along looked lifeless, now begins to stir. A doubt may arise as to the meaning of the Supreme awakening from sleep. He is ever alert with knowledge; in fact, He is the very embodiment of knowledge. There can be no question of waking up, when He does not sleep at all. True. But what is meant by 'awakening' is that the Causal Phenomenon makes its first movement when It holds that the moment has come for 'creation'; that is, for giving the sentient beings the bodies they deserve according to the merit of their works. 'Awakening' does not mean that alert knowledge, which is conspicuous by its absence so long, has suddenly spurted up. The sleep of the Supreme is not the sleep of inertia. It is yōgic sleep. 'Yōga' means 'method of protection'; 'sleep' means 'deeply thinking about it'. Thus 'Yōgic sleep' means 'contemplation on the means to be adopted in bringing back to Himself those sentient beings who cannot survive, separated from Him'. 'Waking up', therefore, means 'preparation to move His body' which is the Primordial Nature (Prakṛti), as a means to aid them. It is a recognition that it is time to extend protection to those who seek His succour.

When the lion wakes up, he opens his eyes gradually, bit by bit. By prolonged sleep, his eyes become tinged with red and appear to rain live coals. When the eyes are half-open with the lashes suspending between the lids, red glare beams out from them. Then he opens his eyes fully. The looks are so fierce that none can dare to come within their range. Even the lioness which has always kept company with him curls up to a side, unable to stand the sharpness of the first look of authority. When the lioness is in such nervous plight, the others stand nowhere. Likewise, even ŚrīMāhalaṁsī dare not approach the Supreme at the time he opens His eyes and casts the first look. Brahma, Rudra, Indra and other immortals and the nityasūras are frightened; and they slink by and avoid His look from afar. The lion has a particular scent and he makes his hairs which carry that scent to stand on

end. All types of scents merge in the Supreme; and when He awakes all fragrances are wafted in all directions.

When Time gives the signal, the Causal Phenomenon starts the creative process, thinking that the opportune moment has arrived for the union of the sentient and the insentient. The Supreme wills that He should become many. The emergence of this 'Will' to become many is indicated by the words 'awakened' and 'cast his looks'— "*Aikṣata bahusyām prajā yēya*:"—The Supreme wills that He be born as varied many". The Upaniṣad mentions that this 'Will' of the Causal Supreme is "His look". As soon as this 'Will' strikes, Effulgence (*Tejas*) emerges; and from it comes *jala*, water; and out of it *Pṛthvi*, the earth. This sequence of creation is indicated in *tlviḷittu, vēri mayir poṅga*. 'Ti' means 'a bright object'. After the emergence of brightness, mention is made here of the last 'Pṛthvi' or earth; and the fundamental quality of earth is scent. "*Vēri*" means "scent"; and by this word earth is suggested. *Chāndōgya* Upaniṣad describes the process of creation: first effulgence, then water, and then earth, and then the other elements. That process is here indicated by the *gōpikas* in this *Pāsuram*.

They are awakening *Kṛṣṇa*, *Yaśoda*'s lion-cub, who is asleep on the mountain-sides of *Nīla*'s breasts. They request him to be a lion in waking up, in casting looks, in making the hair stand on end, and in walking out. They have come there with the sole object of looking at his beauty at dawn; they have no other benefit to seek, no other favour to ask. Their longing is to see his beauty from his first stir after sleep, be it gentle or forbidding, and experience the joy of it.

3. *veppāḍum pērndudaṇi mūri nlmirndu*

"Rolling on all sides, stretching his limbs, the lion marches forward." The *gōpikas* describe the usual movements of the lion as he wakes up. As soon as the lion awakens, he casts fierce looks which emit red fire coals. He makes his hair stand on end; then spreads his natural scent all around. He rolls on all sides to shake off his drowsiness. He stretches his limbs. Then he stands, stretches forward and backward. The normal movements of the lion and other beasts at dawn are thus naturally and pleasingly described in this *pāsuram*.

This description equally applies to Lord Kṛṣṇa. They wish that Kṛṣṇa, who is one with Nīlāḍḍvi on the couch, should wake up, open his eyes, cast his red looks around, roll on the bed to get over drowsiness, stretch his body and limbs, get up from bed and walk towards them. As propounded in the Vēdānta, the Causal Phenomenon alone, as One without a second, lies down shrivelled up, absorbing into Itself all the individual Selves and the Primordial Nature, which in that indivisible state cannot be distinguished as Its body with name and form. That Supreme One wills to become diversified into many varied forms. Immediately, elements like light, water and earth emerge. And they combine into gross elemental forces and form into an Egg. Out of it emerges Brahma with golden womb, Hiranyagarbha. The Supreme permeates Brahma and becoming immanent in him creates the whole universe, making it appear that Brahma is the creator. The whole process of creation is symbolised in the lion's awakening, casting looks, making hair stand on end, rolling on all sides, stretching limbs, extending body forward and marching out. From this we learn that the whole universe is the body of the Supreme; and that before creation, when Causal Principle lies contracted like the lion in the den, the universe does not appear to exist; but, all the same, it does exist and is real. No organ of the lion's body, that does not previously exist while he lies shrunk in the den, can suddenly shoot up when he comes out of it. Only those organs which are unseen when he lies huddled up, become visible when he wakes and stretches them. In a similar way, the world, which has lost name and form when merged in the Supreme, now separates from Him and becomes manifest in several forms and names.

4. *muḷangip purappaṭṭu pōdaru māpōlē*

“Roaring, the lion comes out of the den.”

The gōpikas desire that Kṛṣṇa should come out of his bed-chamber in a similar way. The roar of the lion is so fierce that on hearing it the animals in the forest are, as it were, frightened to death. Kṛṣṇa too should make a similar roar as he marches out. The changes that are undergone by Primordial Nature (Prakṛti), which is the body of the Supreme, at the time when the Causal Principle (Kāraṇatattva) gets transformed into Effect

(Kāryatattva) as the world (jagat), are already mentioned. The Śruti says: “*Yo Brahmānam vidadhāti pūrvam yō vai vēdāmscha prahiṇōti tasmai*”; The Supreme modifies Primordial Nature till the four-faced Brahma comes into being; and then gives the Vēdas to Brahma.” The roar signifies this giving of the Vēdas to Brahma. Then Brahma creates the whole world, sentient and insentient, in accordance with the Vēdas. This is symbolised in the act of the Lord coming out. Lord Kṛṣṇa is requested to roar like a lion and move out of his bed-chamber to the council-hall and there take his seat on the throne. The beauty displayed, while thus coming out, can be seen in the gait of the Tirupāttāngas as they bear the adored idols in sacred places like Śrīrangam. This beauty can be seen in the movement of the Supreme Self (Paramātmā), of the glorious incarnation, (vibhavāvatāra), of the adored idol (archāmūrti), and of the Immanent Being (antaryāmin). Hearing the prayers of the gōpikas that he should emerge like a lion, Lord Kṛṣṇa enquires: “Shall I appear before you, as I did in an earlier incarnation before Hiranyakaśapa, as Lion-man (Narasimha)? Or shall I present myself before you as I did once before Rāvaṇa (Rāghavasimha) as Lion Rāghava?” The gōpikas reply: “Lord, we have brought in the illustration of a lion only to emphasise that you should present yourself with the majesty and nobility and natural valour of a lion, but not that you should take the form and figure of lion.” So they say:

5. *nīpūvaip pūvaṇṇā*

“Having the tint of the Aviśa flower (*Sesbonia grandiflora*).”
 “How can any comparison be instituted between you and the lion in form and figure? The gentleness and the coolness, the charm and the delicacy of your figure and form, remain intact even when you face your enemies like Śitupāla. Can the lion assume your features, even if he tries to? It is only in regard to a few characteristics that we have introduced the comparison to the lion. There can never be similarity in all respects. We only wish that you should present yourself before us with your innate beauty and tender delicacy suffering no diminution. When the Supreme is in the state of Causal Phenomenon, exceptional attributes consistent with that exalted supremacy shine forth—qualities like omniscience, omnipotence, sovereignty and absolute

power of command. The same Supreme Phenomenon assumes, out of an unaccountable love for suppliants, easily accessible forms such as the glorious incarnations of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa or those of the adored images or idols. And when He thus manifests Himself, He has, in addition, the qualities of beauty of form and colour, tenderness and delicacy, coolness and charm. What the gōpikas long for is, no doubt, that Supreme Phenomenon; but they wish that It should present Itself only in a form that is easily accessible and that pleases the eye and ravishes the heart.

6. *Un kōyil ninṇiṅṇāṇē pōndarul*

“Do us the favour of coming here from your mansion.”

The gōpikas request Kṛṣṇa to come out and give them an opportunity to serve him. They are afraid that if he should invite them into his chamber, their services might get confined to those connected with the time of rest. They would like to have the privilege of rendering services connected with the time of confabulation (gōṣṭi). The experiences of those who abide in devotion take this pattern. The devotees do not wish to force themselves in, to see and serve Him. The yōgis and the sages, on the contrary, believe that the highest service lies in seeing and serving Him at close quarters, in the *sanctum sanctorum*. But the Śrīvaiṣṇavas (the devotees of Śrī Viṣṇu) know that all objects in the world are instinct with the spirit of God; and regarding all visible objects as His glory, they love them and thus render worship. The gōpikas do not enter Kṛṣṇa's chamber to adore him; rather they invite him to come out. Devotees show greater zest and fondness to adore the deity as he is taken out in a procession amidst the chanting of hymns of benediction by a band of devout men, than to worship the deity in the inner shrine. What the gōpikas have previously referred to as Nandagōpa's mansion, they now call ‘your mansion: un kōyil.’ By this, it is clear that that mansion is the common residence of both Nanda and Kṛṣṇa. Praṇava or *Aum* is the common residence of both the Supreme Self and the individual self. In this, Akāra denotes the Supreme and Makāra the individual self. Praṇava defines the nature of the Supreme and proves the nature of the self. Thus it is concerned with both. Praṇava is the home of the Supreme, the ultimate Possessor of all. It also makes known the nature of the individual self who belongs

to the Supreme. Thus is it concerned with both. Nandagōpa's mansion also becomes Kṛṣṇa's home. Praṇava declares how the individual self belongs both to God and to His devotees. Again, the heart in our body is the place where the individual self resides. The same heart-lotus is the residence of the Supreme as well. Thus it is common to both. Wherever the individual self resides, there inevitably resides the Supreme as the Immanent One. The home of the self will necessarily become the home of the Supreme Self. Nandagōpa's Koil automatically becomes 'Un-Koil' 'Kṛṣṇa's home.'

The gōpikas desire that Kṛṣṇa should come out of his chamber and walk up to them, in the same way as Śrī Rāma has come out of his mansion holding Sumantra's hand in his. "Lord, we are happy to have seen your beauty as you take rest in bed. Let us now enjoy the beauty of your gait as you walk to the throne. Give us the privilege of witnessing your beauty as you get seated on the throne." It is said that the damsels of heaven have given up dancing after seeing the beauty of Kṛṣṇa's gait during his rambles in the forest. Kṛṣṇa's gait has a unique beauty. One of the names in Viṣṇu Sahasranāma is 'Chaturgatiḥ.' That is, Bhagavān has four kinds of gait: the gait of an elephant, heavy and stolid, signifying ponderous strength; the gait of a lion, majestic and imperious, signifying valour; the gait of a bull, steady and indifferent, signifying hauteur; and the gait of a tiger, fierce and agile, signifying rage. In the Rāmāyaṇa, references to these types of Śrī Rāma's gait are made: "*Puruṣarṣabha*" "*Rāma śārdulam*," "*matta mātanga gāminam*," "*simhavikrānta gāminam*." These types of gait can also be witnessed in the styles of the bearers of Śrī Ranganātha's palanquin at Śrīrangam. The gōpikas wish that Lord Kṛṣṇa will fascinate them with his gait.

7. *Kōppuḍaiya śrīya śiṅgāsanattirundu*

"Be seated on your throne which has unique associations and allow us to serve you."

The gōpikas want him to speak from the throne and not from his bed. Though Kṛṣṇa is known to cheat them with lies, once he ascends the throne he cannot but speak the truth. The throne is characterised "*śrīya śiṅgama*," because it resembles a valiant

lion. Whatever is spoken from it becomes an irreversible truth and is unfailingly implemented in full. Śrī Rāma's word proffering protection to Vibhīṣaṇa by the seaside, in the presence of monkey-warriors (Vānaras), has become an irreversible pledge; such irreversibility applies to the word when spoken from the throne of Kṛṣṇa. The same guarantee of implementation applies to the words that have fallen from the lips of Kṛṣṇa when seated on Arjuna's chariot at Kurukṣetra. Śrī Rāma declares that giving protection to those who seek it from him has been accepted by him as an inescapable obligation: "*Ētadvratam mama*". Kṛṣṇa has held out on assurance, on Kurukṣhētra battle-field, that he makes the people, who seek his protection, free from all sins; and has comforted them not to grieve "*mā śucha*". The gōpikas desire that Kṛṣṇa will now speak such a comforting word to them from the throne. The Supreme Self installs Himself as the Ordainer of all objects with form and name, into which the Primordial Nature transforms itself, and receives adoration and service. Thus His magnificent affluence (*vibhūti*) itself is His throne. And it has manifold and varied associations, unique in themselves. Only when one sees God's immanence, everywhere and always in this glorious universe, and loves it, does one become fit to receive His grace. Viśvāmitra and Sita had the privilege of enjoying the beauty of Śrī Rāma when he lay asleep. Bharata had the good fortune to see and enjoy the beauty of Śrī Rāma when he was seated on the pial of the cottage in Chitrakūṭa. The monkey-warriors were lucky to drink in the beauty of Rāma as he stood on the shore of the sea with his bow drawn. Now the gōpikas are eager to see Kṛṣṇa's beauty in three similar situations. The beauty of the adored idol as he moves from the inner shrine to the council-hall there to hold court, seated on the throne, could also be seen in the present situation. Yet another situation that is suggested is the way in which the Supreme, lying at the base of the column of consciousness (*rūlādhāra*) is roused by contemplation and made to move up to the heart, (*Hṛdayapliṥṥa*) there to be held for reverential worship. Thus different methods of worship are suggested in these words of the gōpikas-worship of the Supreme Self, of the glorious Incarnations, of the Idols installed in temples, and of the Immanent spirit presiding in the heart.

7. *Yām vanda kāriyam ārayndau ēlōtempāvāy*

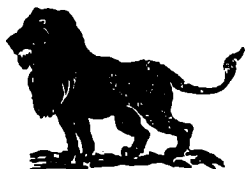
“Do graciously consider the submission we make and grant it.”

By saying “We ”.they speak of their “particularity.” “You know us: we do not insist that—knowing, as you do, our nature—you should extend consideration to us as the weaker sex and come to us. We could not help coming to you, even though, by so doing, we have risked a blemish on our feminine nature and suffered loss of self-respect. You should have come to us: but exasperated by separation from you, we have managed to come to you, toiling with unsteady and faltering steps”.

The gōpikas do not directly mention the purpose of their visit: they simply say that he has to fulfil the purpose for which they now approach him. The purpose is specifically mentioned in the 29th Pāsuram. They may have thought it indiscreet to hasten the mentioning of purpose. They recall to mind now impervious to appeal ŚrīRāma could be, when Bharata, accompanied by the ministers and people, went to the forest and importuned him to agree to the coronation as King. Rāma sent him back giving him his Sandals (Pādukas): such was his stern independence and tenacious resolution. The gōpikas therefore exercise caution; they wait for the opportune moment to mention their purpose.

Now that they have realised that the individual self belongs to the Supreme Self and that it should not have an independent status of its own, the gōpikas could become the objects of God's gracious looks. What is to happen hereafter does not conform to the course predicted by any particular scripture. Whatever happens now depends entirely on His will. It is only upto the stage of acquisition of knowledge and of the realisation of self that conformity to scriptural prescriptions is required. What happens thereafter is beyond the ken of scriptural authorities and outside the range of expression . That is why, the gōpikas are unable to specify what exactly their purpose is; and so state vaguely “the purpose for which we have come”, The gōpikas invite his attention to the very fact of their coming there and all the strains involved in it. Possibly, they expect him to comfort them with soothing words; “Alas! What trouble and strain have you undergone for me? I should have myself gone in search of you, and waited for an opportune moment; and in the meantime I should have sought the intervention

of mediators to negotiate rapprochement with you. I regret putting you to all this trouble". Quite possibly, they expect that he will ask pardon of them; and then give them a warm reception. Lord Kṛṣṇa leaves the bed-chamber, walks up to the throne and getting seated on it accosts the gōpikas in his usual kindly way.



PĀŚURAM XXIV

PREFACE.

At Kurukṣētra, Arjuna commands Kṛṣṇa to drive his chariot and station it between the rival armies which are arrayed for battle. Kṛṣṇa obeys him. Here, too, when the gōpikas express their wish that he should move out of his bed-chamber and walk to the throne and be seated on it, Kṛṣṇa, who is easily accessible to his suppliants, shows himself incapable of gainsaying their request. He readily accedes to it; and as he walks to the throne, Nīlādēvi accompanies him, pronouncing benediction. The gōpikas drink in the beauty of his gait. And as he sits on the throne with one foot on the footstool and the other resting on the thigh, the gōpikas notice the redness of Kṛṣṇa's feet. They feel disturbed with guilt that his feet have become sore with the strain of walking which is forced on him by their request. The gōpikas, who have urged Kṛṣṇa to come out and be seated on the throne to consider the purpose of their visit, now begin to chant benediction to him, forgetting to seek the musical instrument 'paṇai' from him. In Daṇḍaka forest, the Rīṣis, who have gone to Rāma to recount their sufferings at the hands of the Rākṣasas and seek his protection, forget their purpose when they see Rāma's exceptional beauty and tender delicacy and begin glorifying him with their benediction. They feel miserable that such a delicate-featured Rāma is to be put to the strain of walking. Similar is the reaction of the gōpikas. They imagine that when, he, as Trivikrama, measured the world with his feet, his feet must have become red with strain. They feel that they are as much hard-hearted and guilty today, as the one who made it necessary for him to measure the worlds then. Unable to contain this misery, they invoke protection for his feet.

Doubts may arise whether the gōpikas, who are themselves weak and are in anguish and who have come seeking his protection, can secure safety for him; or how far it is proper that they should pronounce benediction on him. There are two stages in the understanding of the true nature of self, and the true nature, form, attributes and glory of the Supreme, and of the kinship between the

self and the Supreme Self. The first stage is that of knowledge and the second is that of love. In the first stage, knowledge of the nature of God and of self leads to the conviction that God is the Saviour, the Ordainer, the Omniscience and the Omnipotence; and that the self has little knowledge and less power; and therefore he needs to be commanded and saved. When this conviction is fully established, knowledge ripens into love. What strikes them first when they rest their eyes on the Supreme is His beauty. His handsome features and their tender delicacy charm them. When they thus fall under their spell, they forget that He is the Saviour and that they are the protected; and they presume that they can protect Him and take measures accordingly. This is the stage of love.

We have seen the stage of knowledge in the previous Pāsuram, when the gōpikas request Kṛṣṇa to leave his bed-chamber and come out. The Supreme who is the Cause of the world permeates all objects as the Immanent One; and assumes as His body Primordial Nature (Prakṛti), that has diversified itself in different forms with varied names. When Śrīmannārāyaṇa, who reigns in the Heavenly Abode, descends like us into the world as the incarnations of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, people bewitched by their beauty sing their benediction from the depths of love. The all-saving Lord seems to the eye of intense love as one needing protection. Thus the noblest activity worthy of pursuit appears to be the pronouncement of benediction (maṅgalāśāsanam). During the times of the incarnations of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, although they are, in fact, protectors of all, there are many who, out of their intense love for them, have considered them as needing protection; and so are eager to pronounce benediction on them. When we worship the Idols in our temples, we follow this tradition and pronounce benediction on the deity at the end. It is well to know that the benediction marks the culmination of all the preceding process of worship. The gōpikas have gone beyond the stage of knowledge and entered the state of love; so they make no effort to enlist Kṛṣṇa's interest in getting rid of the evils that have befallen them; nor do they seek his favour to get more of the good things of life. They are content to sing benediction on him with their hearts filled only with love.

There are several others who, like the gōpikas, have become oblivious of their own nature and of God's nature in their excessive love for Him; and indulged in singing benediction on Him. During

the time of the incarnation of Rāma, Viśvāmitra who knew Rāma to be the Supreme Self and who openly declared this conviction to Daśaratha and others, took Śrī Rāma with him and gave him all his wealth of divinely-potent weapons. Such a sage became nervous about the safety of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa when they were ready to fight Tāṭaka and her hordes of demons. Out of his intense love for them arose this concern; and he began pronouncing benediction on them, '*Swasti Rāghavayōrastu*,' and wished them victory. King Janaka is a tattvavēṭṭa, a sage and philosopher and karma yōgi, a doer of works without attachment to them. He must have known that Śrī Rāma is the Supreme Self. But when giving away the bride Sīta to Śrī Rāma he apprehends that when two such models of exceptional beauty join their hands in wedlock, they may catch the evil eye and so pronounces benediction on them.

*Iyam Sītā mama sūtā sahadharmacharītava
Praticcha chainām bhadramtē pāṇim gṛhṇīṣva pāṇinā.*

"This is Sīta, my daughter. Accept her as your life-partner. 'Bhandramtē,' May good attend on you."

When sages like Viśvāmitra and Janaka have thus been deluded by their love of Rāma into nervous anxiety about his safety, it is needless to speak of how Daśaratha becomes wholly shrouded with that love and into what depths of agony it flings him. While returning to Ayōdhya after Sīta's wedding, Paraśurāma intercepts the party on the way and challenges Rāma to prove his prowess. Daśaratha is thoroughly shaken with fright and piteously entreats Paraśurāma to spare his son. Daśaratha knows that his son has shown singular prowess in destroying Tāṭaka, Subāhu and other notorious demons and in shattering the bow of Śiva; and yet, overwhelmed with love for Rāma, he fears that when Paraśurāma throws the challenge his son is undone. When Daśaratha hears that Rāma has overcome Paraśurāma, he revives with a sigh of relief that he and his son are reborn. Thus does love throw knowledge under veil. Of all his devotees, none knows so much of Rāma's power and sovereignty as Sīta does. Even she expresses concern for the safety of Rāma and pronounces benediction on him. When Rāma goes with Sumantra in response to the summons of Daśaratha from Kaikeyi's mansion, Sīta goes with him up to

the threshold wishing him God-speed; and then invokes the protection of Indra who with his thunderbolt holds sway in the east, and of other Celestials reigning over the other different directions. (*Ādwāramanuvavrāja maṅgaḷā nyabhida dhyuṣi*). This attempt at invoking protection to the Protector of the whole universe is no offence. It is only an act of love. No wonder that Kausalya invokes protection for her son as he goes into exile and showers blessing and benediction on him; the mother does not perceive the immense greatness of her son. The Ṛṣis of Daṇḍaka forest have gained control over their senses and earned knowledge of the Supreme; they realise that Rāma is an incarnation of the Supreme; and so they go to seek refuge in him. But on seeing the charming beauty of the divine features of Śrī Rāma, all their knowledge gets shrouded; and they surround him and pronounce their benediction:

*Tētam sōma mivō dyantam dṛṣṭvāvai dharmachārīṇaḥ
maṅgaḷāni prayujjānāḥ purivāryōpatasthirē.*

The moment the stage of love manifests itself, even great sages find that their knowledge recedes; and the idea that God is the protector and they are the protected disappears. They who have come to seek protection from Him, themselves feel that they are to provide protection for Him. Such reversal of relationship is effected by love. When Hanumān, whose love for Rāma is exemplary, sees Rāma for the first time, he exclaims with concern: "Alas, why have you removed your ornaments? The exceptional beauty of your bodily organs may easily catch an evil eye." With this anxiety agitating him, Hanumān keeps alert everafter to guard Rāma from possible danger. Rāma's beauty has thus cast an illusion on such a scholarly sage as Hanumān that he thinks that Rāma needs protection. Such is the strong influence and power that love exerts. Jaṭāyu knows that Śrī Rāma has killed, single-handed, Khara, Dūṣaṇa and their fourteen thousand followers in the forest. But when Rāma in his search for Sita happens to meet him while he is about to collapse, Jaṭāyu addresses him as Ayuṣmān, thus blessing him to have a long life. Sugrīva's love for Rāma has no bounds. That is why he fears that Vibhiṣaṇa who comes from the enemy-camp may, if given shelter, put Rāma to death. His love for Rāma makes him forget Rāma's miraculous prowess, although he has witnessed abundant proofs of it, in

denuding seven trees of all their foliage with one arrow, in casting the corpse of Dundubhi an incredibly long distance with a little effort of the toe and in killing the mighty Vāli with a single arrow. Love thus makes us blind to the strength of those whom we love; we are left with concern for those whose safety is assured. The Rāmāyaṇa is sprinkled throughout with passages of benediction.

Now, in the incarnation of Kṛṣṇa, Dēvaki and Vasudēva are fully aware that their son, who is born with four arms holding the lotus, the conch, the disc and the mace, is no other than the Supreme Person; yet they desire that Kṛṣṇa should withdraw this form for fear that he may meet with danger from Kamsa. Enchanted by the beauty and delicacy of his features, they are beside themselves with love for him; and their love gets the better of their knowledge of his strength; and they apprehend danger to his safety. It is well-known how Nanda and Yaśōda invoke protection and pronounce benediction on Kṛṣṇa, although they have witnessed several of his miraculous feats of strength and valour. Pronouncing benediction on the Lord is an act of deep love; and so it is not in conflict with their knowledge of him. Those who worship an idol installed in a temple, even while receiving all favours from it, entertain anxious fears about dangers that may befall it. Dhanurdās, a great devotee, used to carry an unsheathed dagger pointed at his heart, so that he might put an end to his life, should any danger befall Śrī Ranganātha when he was taken out in a procession. Dhanurdās felt that life was not worth living if he could not prevent such a mishap to the Deity. Likewise, the gōpikas who have come there with expectations to receive the help of Kṛṣṇa, feel guilty of causing him trouble, when they see how red his feet have become by walking to the throne; and in their distress, they sing benediction on him.

Anṛivvulagamaḷandāy ! aḍipōṭṭi

ṣṣenṛaṅguttennaiṅgai ṣettāy ! tiṛal pōṭṭi

ponṛaccagaḍamudaittāy ! puḡaḷ pōṭṭi

kaṇṛukunilā veṛindāy ! kaḷal pōṭṭi

kunṛukudaiyā veḍuttāy ! guṇam pōṭṭi

venṛu pagai keḍukkum ninkaiyil velpōṭṭi

enṛenṛunsēvagame yeṭṭippaṛaḷkoḷvān

iṇṛiyām vandōm iraṅgelōrempāvāy.

Summary.

Blessed be Thy divine feet with which Thou hadst measured the worlds, received as alms from King Bali, who appropriated the kingdom that was not his and gave trouble to the immortals. Blessed be Thy strong arms with which Thou hadst blasted the fort and the fine buildings of Lanka in the south and destroyed Rāvaṇa and his hordes for the crime of carrying off Sita from Thee! Blessed be Thy glory when with Thy outstretched leg Thou hadst shattered to pieces the cart which, though originally meant as a shield of protection, became a source of danger when it was possessed by a demon! Blessed be Thy legs, stretched apart, forward and rearward, and rooted to the earth, when Thou hast cast, like a stone from the sling, the demon-possessed calf against the demon-possessed wood-apple tree, thus killing them both simultaneously! Blessed be Thy gracious love, which has prompted Thee to raise the mountain Govardhana and hold it as an umbrella to protect the cows and the gōpālas from the heavy shower of stones which Indra has caused in his wrath that the sacrificial rites in his honour are given up. Blessed be Thy Velā-yudha, which in Thy hand becomes so powerful as to root out Thine enemies and yield Thee victory! We have come here to sing about Thy heroic exploits and obtain the musical instrument 'paṇai,' with which we can carry on our ritual. May Thou be pleased to do us this favour!

1. *Anṟu ivvulaga maḷandāy aḍi pōṣṟi*

"Blessed are the feet that measured this world then (at that time in the past)." This pāṣuram begins with the word 'anṟu,' 'then,' and ends with the word 'inṟu,'—'now' 'Then' refers to the time when King Bali has given trouble to the divine feet of the Lord; and 'now' refers to the present when the gōpikas put Kṛṣṇa's feet to strain. Both times appear alike to the gōpikas. Thrice in the course of these thirty pāṣurams, in the third, seventeenth and twentyfourth, the story of Trivikrama is glorified. There is close association between the incarnations of Śrīkṛṣṇa and Vāmana; and hence it is that they glorify Vāmana so frequently. Both these incarnations are noteworthy for they reach the zenith of easy accessibility. Trivikrama has the unique distinction of placing His foot on all, irrespective of their seeking such privileged favour from Him or not. By his magnetic beauty and goodness,

Śrīkṛṣṇa has cast a spell on the gōpikas who give up their natural inhibitions and social conventions, and ignoring the objections of their relatives and sacrificing self-respect, leave their homes and flock to the feet of Kṛṣṇa. In this respect Kṛṣṇa is similar to Trivikrama who has trampled under foot Bali's pride. Bali is highly egotistic; he thinks in his pride that he is the lord of the world, which is not his; and that he is *himself* bestowing gifts and not at the instance or prompting of God. By his association with Primal Nature, the self develops egoism and thinks that he is the doer and that everything is his. God alone can turn him away from this vain egoism. The Lord's feet alone can free him from it. And [it is they that have made Bali realise that he is not independent; and nothing that he has claimed as his is his. There is none at that time to sing benediction to those blessed feet which have conferred such a great benefit. Now, the gōpikas recognise how the sight of the divine feet of Śrīkṛṣṇa has released them from the pride of sensitive femininity. And this realisation brings to their minds how Trivikrama's feet have smashed similar egoism in the past. And so they sing: "Blessed be the feet of Lord Trivikrama."

Āṇḍāl is the daughter of Peri-Ālwār. All the Ālwārs have considered singing benediction on God as the highest end to pursue; and among them Peri-Ālwar is the foremost. When he has the vision of the Lord on the day of his triumph at the King's court, he begins singing the benediction "*Pallāṇḍu Pallāṇḍu*." In a similar way, his daughter Āṇḍāl pronounces benediction "*Pōṭṭi pōṭṭi*" on Kṛṣṇa as he comes out of his bed-chamber and ascends the throne in the council-hall, for fear that he may catch an evil eye. Though Vāmana has done a great favour by sanctifying all with His touch, none at the time sings His benediction. The gōpikas, who regret this lapse, now supply the omission by starting this hymn with pronouncing benediction on His feet.

With his beautiful and delicate lotus-feet, Vāmana has measured this world—this hard world, full of stump and shrub, rock and hill, this insensitive world with a demoniac temper. Śrī Dēvi, the darling of the Lotus, flower-like in her tenderness of age and delicacy of conduct and character, and her compeer Bhūdēvi, do but gently touch His feet lest they should turn sore—so delicate are His feet. And yet with such feet He measures the world!

How gracious is His love that prompts Him to undergo this strain! He does not merely touch this world; He holds it under His foot. And this world which is thus measured is so insensitive that it does not feel happy, much less does it express gratitude, that the Divine foot has blessed it with Its touch. Still, Trivikrama measures this insensitive and ungrateful world as though He does it for His own benefit. He does it for establishing His right over the world as His own. Neither the earth nor any other region seems to feel the privilege of thus being claimed by Him. And Trivikrama does not seem to mind this indifference. Bali goes into sulks as he has lost his kingdom. Sukra, who knows Vāmana to be no other than the Lord, tries to the last to obstruct Bali from making the gift. The celestials, filled with ecstasy that they have got back their kingdom, leave the scene forgetting their benefactor. Alas! none of them thinks of pronouncing benediction on those tender and lovely feet, which have been put to such enormous strain. The gōpikas feel miserable when they think of this glaring omission. Now, therefore, they make amends by singing the benediction.

2. *senraṅgu ttennilaṅgaiṣettāy tīṭal pōṭṭi*

“Blessed be the strength that marched to beautiful Lanka and destroyed it.”

The gōpikas seem to feel more miserable when they think of the strain the Lord's feet suffered in the incarnation of Rāma than in that of Vāmana. In Trivikrama the suzerainty over the entire universe is manifest. As He raises His foot, Brahma reverently washes it with water. That sacred water which washes His foot becomes Ganga. Rudra holds Ganga on his head and thereby becomes Śiva. As Trivikrama's sovereignty is established and as He is worshipped by Brahma, Rudra and other immortals in this incarnation, strain for His feet may well be endurable. But Śrī Rāma is an *entirely* human incarnation; there is no admixture of the divine in it. Even when Brahma, Rudra and other immortals declare in one voice that he is God Himself, Śrī Rāma declines the appellation and announces that he is only a human being. In the incarnation of Vāmana, the strain to the feet is limited to two or three steps. But in the incarnation of Rāma, there is no reckoning of the distance he has covered on foot in hills and dales, plains and woods, amidst wild beasts and wilder demons. He has had to fight several battles with his weapons. So the gōpikas sing

benediction on Rāma. Vāmana subjugates Bali by casting the spell of his beauty. Rāvaṇa is not to be so overcome; Rāma therefore has to overthrow him with his might. So the gōpikas bless his strength here. Vāmana stations himself at one place and stretches his foot to measure the world. Rāma has to walk the entire distance to Lanka Senraṅgu, without the protection of sandals for his tender feet. How much trouble has he endured with his tender feet cut to bleeding on sharp stones! The hunter makes his way to the lair where the tiger lounges and then kills it. Likewise, Rāma has to trace his way to Lanka where Rāvaṇa lives overcoming several obstacles on the way—such as forts in the woods, plains and waters—and then put an end to him. Rāma has marched to Lanka in the south (not minding that going south is inauspicious) for the purpose of bringing Rāvaṇa to book. Reaching Lanka, Rāma does not at one stroke kill Rāvaṇa. He slowly eliminates, one by one, the close associates and kith and kin of Rāvaṇa, in the hope that a change may come in Rāvaṇa's attitude. Rāvaṇa is no ordinary demon. He never feels upset when all the celestials hurl at him all the divine weapons they have procured by long penance. He feels them to be as smooth and tender as drenched flowers thrown at him by women when sporting in water. Rāma wishes to see if he can, by his superior might, make Rāvaṇa turn towards him. So he first destroys his fort, then his army; he kills his henchmen and ministers, then his brother and finally his son; he shatters his chariot, kills his charioteer and breaks his bow; he magnanimously permits Rāvaṇa to go home and come back next day rearmed and refreshed. When all these gestures failed to convert Rāvaṇa from hostility, he has no alternative but to kill him. Blessed be that prowess with which Śrī Rāma exterminates, by degrees, the might of Rāvaṇa, who figures as the conqueror of the worlds. While the gōpikas exercising their imagination feel anxious concern for Rāma apprehending harm for him, Rāma seems to comfort them with a show of his matchless prowess. Fearing that such display might catch an evil eye, the gōpikas pronounce benediction on his strength. When the Lord appears before Peri-Ālwār (Āṇḍāl's father), Peri-Ālwār begins singing benediction on his arms to obviate the evil eye; then the Lord points at his weapons, the conch and the disc, to assure him that they will prevent any harm to his arms. Instead of feeling reassured, Peri-Ālwār pronounces benediction on the conch and the disc for fear that they might

catch the evil eye. While the gōpikas wish to pronounce benediction on Rāma because he has over-strained himself in crossing impassable woods and in attacking the mighty Rāvaṇa, Rāma shows his prowess to them. And then the gōpikas fearing that his extraordinary strength might catch the evil eye, bless his strength itself so that no harm might come to it. Rāma's strength is his shield of protection; and the gōpikas wish that strength to be free from evil eye, "poṭṭi". Their endeavour is like building a wall to protect the boundary-wall, which itself is raised to protect the city.

They glorify Trivikrama and bless His feet that have subjugated egoism. Egoism has a tendency to sprout forth again, even after it is once overcome. In the incarnation of Rāma, we see the Lord's magnanimity, in Himself marching forth to the place where egoism originates and flourishes and in destroying it. This body itself is Lanka. The mind in the body is Rāvaṇa. The ten senses are the ten heads of Rāvaṇa. The Lord permeates the body and becomes immanent in it and sets to damaging the mind, so as to make it unfit for enjoying sense-pleasures; and then He kills egoistic pride which rules the mind and establishes the supremacy of sattva (tendency to purity), and sees to it that it devotes itself to His worship. The gōpikas bless the strength of the Lord which has conferred the greatest favour on all. The attitude of mere sages is: "Śrī Rāma is our only Saviour and none else; and we are the ones to be saved by him." Not so the love-intoxicated gōpikas; they want to protect his strength themselves and so invoke safety for it from the evil eye. After glorifying the two incarnations of Vāmana and Śrī Rāma, they recall to mind the more frightening incidents in Śrī Kṛṣṇa's life and pronounce benediction on him.

3. *ponṛaccagaḍam udaittāy pugaḷ poṭṭi*

"Blessed be the glory of killing Śakaṭāsura with a kick of the outstretched leg."

It is a mature, grown-up Rāma, who has learnt the science of weapons from boyhood and who has received the potent divine weapons from Viśvāmitra, that has killed Rāvaṇa. Kṛṣṇa is a baby of barely twenty-one days when Śakaṭāsura comes upon him. Yaśōda takes the baby to the bank of Yamuna, arranges a cradle beneath a cart and puts it in it, while she goes to the river to fetch water. As the baby grows hungry, it begins crying and

kicks its legs up. Seeing that there is none near about to protect the child, a demon finds it opportune to possess the cart and to try to crush the child to death. This is a highly critical situation; the child is helpless and there is none nearby to rush to his rescue. Then it is that the crying child's outstretched leg touches the cart; and with that touch the cart is smashed to smithereens. Yaśōda rushes back, picks up the child with great anxiety, kisses him, hugs him to her bosom and invokes protection for him. The child Kṛṣṇa's foot has earned greater fame than the foot of Vāmana or the foot of Rāma. This auspicious foot has saved Kṛṣṇa just at the start of his life and given him to us. This foot has not been stretched with the intention of killing Śakaṭāsura; the child crying in hunger naturally kicks its legs up; unexpectedly, and quite casually, the foot grazes the cart and brings it down with a crash. It is this auspicious foot that is our refuge. In fact, it has saved the Lord Himself. This Lotus-foot provides protection not only to the self which belongs to the Supreme Self but also to the Supreme Self to whom all belong. Śrī Rāma who is grown up and mature in wisdom kills Subāhu and spares Mārīcha, when they attack him. He makes Sūrpaṇakha free after disfiguring her. By not exterminating his enemies, he brings himself into danger later. But the little foot of child Kṛṣṇa put an end to Śakaṭāsura. How glorious is that foot! Thus the halo surrounding that foot is brighter than that associated with Trivikrama's, than that connected with Śrī Rāmā's strength. So the gōpikas sing benediction on it to ward off the evil eye. The palm of Śrī Rāma is hardened by his holding the bow always. The foot of Śrīkṛṣṇa is hardened by his kicking the cart. The glory of his foot is this hardened part; and on it they sing their benediction. Vāmana subjugates egoism and keeps it under his foot; thereby suggesting that egoism attains sanctity when it surrenders at the Lord's feet, when "Aham" becomes "Dāsōham." Egoism is the result of lack of discrimination between the body and the soul. On a close scrutiny of the mind, the root of egoism is traced to the tendency of pride (rajōguṇa), which again results in avivēka, unwisdom. It is this egoistic unwisdom that is presented in Rāvaṇa and that is killed by Rāma. Ignorance (avidya) is connected with Karma (works). The story of Śakaṭāsura deals with the destruction of Karma. 'Śakaṭa' means 'a cart'; 'cart' is a means of transport from one place to another. The cart which conveys the Jīva from one

body to another is Karma. It is on account of Karma that the self assumes strange and different bodies. And this cart of Karma has two wheels, one of past sins and the other of future sins. All works, both good and bad, done during innumerable births from beginningless time, pile up to form *sanchitakarma*. All works, both meritorious and sinful, performed during the present life-time, the results of which will be experienced in the future birth, constitute *āgāmikarma*. These two, *sanchita* and *āgāmi*, are the causes of births in the world. Karma therefore can be compared to a *Śakaṭa* (cart). ‘*Śakaṭa*’ means “that which shatters happiness.” It is Karma which shatters the bliss which the self enjoys in union with the Supreme. It is karma which throws the self into *samsāra*, bondage to birth-and-death. Hence Karma is called *Śakaṭa*. Only when it comes into contact with God’s foot does it crumble and fall down. The halo associated with His foot is owing to this great benefit of redemption from karma that it gives. At this stage, the *gōpikas* recall to mind a situation which has involved Kṛṣṇa in a more serious crisis and they sing benediction on his feet.

4. *Kaṇṇu kuṇilā verindāy kaḷal pōṭṭi*

“Blessed be thy outstretched legs when thou flingst, like a stone from a sling, the demon-possessed calf.” Kamsa commissions several demons to put Kṛṣṇa to death. First Pūtana and then *Śakaṭāsura* attempt to kill him in his childhood; but are killed by him, instead. But Kamsa does not give up his efforts. When Kṛṣṇa grows into a boy and is engaged in tending the calves in the forest, two demons come together; one enters into a calf and the other into a wood-apple tree. The demon-possessed calf is *Vatsāsura* and the demon-possessed tree is *Kapitthāsura*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa easily discovers their evil design; he devises a plan by which he can destroy them both at one stroke. Catching hold of the four legs of the calf in his grip, he flings it at the demon-possessed tree, like a stone from the sling. When he flings it, he stands with his legs apart, one to the fore and the other in the rear. The *gōpikas* invoke safety to those legs. They are frightened, when not one enemy but two come together to attack him; but when Kṛṣṇa strikes one against the other, both the enemies get killed. The sturdy steadiness of his feet gives the necessary swing and force which bring about the death of both on mutual impact. So they pronounce benediction on his feet.

Even when egoism is dead, residuary tastes and latent tendencies still cling to the mind, and divert it to objects of sense, and become a hindrance to contemplation on God. Thus are they enemies of God; and God alone should destroy them. Vatsāsura is that latent taste; and Kapithāsura, the incipient tendency. Calves persist in their attempts to taste things. Velaga fruit, wood-apple, is noted for its agreeable smell or scent.. By striking one against the other, Kṛṣṇa has put an end to both the latent taste and smell simultaneously.

5. *Kuṇṇu kuḍaiyā veḍuttāy guṇam pōṭri*

“Blessed be the Lord’s graciousness which has held the mountain aloft as an umbrella.”

Indra develops egoism not only in regard to mundane affairs but also in relation to Vēdic rites and spiritual matters. In the situations already cited, Kṛṣṇa saves himself or his dependents by killing the attacking enemies. But here his own people, the celestials, turn against his suppliants, the gōpas, and bring disaster to the latter; in such situations protecting his suppliants turns to be a hard task. When, in the past, Indra suffers a miserable plight having lost his realm, Vāmana endures trouble and humiliation and, begging Bali for a favour, succeeds in restoring to Indra his kingdom. Restored to his former glory by his favour, Indra fattens on his share of sacrificial offerings and altogether forgets that the Supreme is the real Enjoyer of all sacrificial offerings and the true Purveyor of all the fruits thereof. When Lord Kṛṣṇa is in Vrēpalle, Indra loses sight of the Lord’s sovereignty over all and His all-pervasiveness. Indra arrogantly presumes that he is the power behind the rain; and the sacrificial rites performed by Yādavas for rain are in his honour. Whatever be the wish of the devotee and whoever be the deity worshipped, the fulfilment of the wish is granted, through that particular deity, by the Supreme, who is immanent in all the deities. Whatever sacrificial rite is performed to the honour of whichever deity, and whatever offering is made, God as the Immanent One receives it. But Indra, though himself a dependent of the Supreme, has unfortunately become obsessed with egoism and felt that he is receiving the offering and that he is giving the boons. In the same way as we develop a sense of vanity that we are doing and enjoying worldly things, Indra has developed a similar pride in the matter of Vēdic rites

It is to mitigate Indra's arrogance that ŚrīKṛṣṇa dissuades the Yādavas from making sacrificial offerings to Indra for the gift of rain; instead, he suggests that they should offer worship to Gōvardhana mountain, as it is that which gives fodder and protection to the cows. Indra has thus been denied propitiatory offerings; and hunger and hurt pride drive him to vengeance. He begins persecution of the gōpālas and cows by ordering a heavy shower of stones on them. Indra, no doubt, is Kṛṣṇa's protege; and it is Kṛṣṇa who has stopped the sacrificial offering to him; but provoked to anger by this denial of food, Indra persecutes Kṛṣṇa's dependants, cows and the gōpālas. Kṛṣṇa shows extraordinary consideration and forbearance towards Indra. He treats Indra as a mere hungry child pelting stones in peevishness. He knows that as soon as the hand wearies with strain, the flinging will stop. So Kṛṣṇa does not become angry with Indra, but gives protection to his people and cows by lifting aloft the Gōvardhana mountain. The mother prevents the child suffering from indigestion from taking food; that child becomes wild with hunger and tries to beat the other children. But the mother, while giving protection to the other children, patiently bears with the irate child. In the same way, Kṛṣṇa shows his intense love for his dependants and patient endurance towards Indra.

When Bali becomes egotistic, the Supreme comes down, changing His nature and form, occupies Bali's realm and makes it His own and placing His foot on him suppresses his arrogant egoism. When Rāvaṇa is swollen with pride, the Supreme exterminates him completely. But Indra is not like them. He knows his true self; he has surrendered to the Supreme. But a temporary lapse has given room for egoism to possess him. His egoism is to be put down without causing him harm, or, much less, destroying him. So Kṛṣṇa waits till Indra exhausts his vengeful ire and gives up the shower of stones. Meanwhile, he gives protection to his people by holding the mountain aloft as an umbrella. Indra comes to himself and makes amends for his folly. He goes to Kṛṣṇa as a penitent, and drenching Kṛṣṇa's head with Kāmadhēnu's milk performs his coronation as 'Gōvinda'.

To offer protection from a shower of stones, a stone-umbrella is necessary; so Kṛṣṇa has held the mountain aloft as umbrella. How apt is his device! If Indra rained torrents of water, instead,

Kṛṣṇa would have lifted the sea itself as the umbrella. In the same way as stones got mixed up with the mountain, the waters would have merged in the sea. How wonderful is his forgiveness! how great his patience! how boundless his love! The gōpikas recite benediction on these excellences of Kṛṣṇa, all the while feeling distressed that his delicate fingers must have swollen with the strain of lifting and holding the mountain in position. To the Almighty Lord, throwing a ball, flinging a calf and lifting a hill are equally easy. But the gōpikas, out of their extreme love, feel concerned and pronounce the benediction.

There is an esoteric significance underlying the lifting of the Gōvardhana. The Supreme is immanent in the souls of all objects. The names concerned with the body such as "Rāma" and "Gōvindu", "Brāhmin", "Kṣatriya" and 'human being' extend in their meaning up to the soul. The soul is neither Brahmin, nor Kṣatriya; but when we say "a Brāhmin" or "a Kṣatriya", the names are applicable not to the body but to the soul. To the philosophers, these terms indicate the Supreme immanent in their souls. When we call one 'a Brāhmin', the term indicates the Supreme immanent in the soul of the man with the body of a Brāhmin. In every object exist these three—the primordial nature (prakṛti), the self (jīva) and the Supreme Self (Paramātmā). The most essential of these three is the Supreme Self; and depending on Him is the self; and closely clinging to the self is the body. Thus viewed, all words serve to make Him known. When we utter the word 'cow', the word means the Supreme that is immanent in the soul that has taken the body of a cow. Lifting the Gōvardhana mountain is significant; it makes us to know that all words propound the Supreme. 'Gou' means 'cow'; also it means 'word'. The meaning of the 'word' is not confined to the external form; it extends to the soul within it and to the Supreme that is the soul of the soul. "Govardhanam: flourishing of the word", takes place when this extensive meaning of the word is understood. The sacrificial rite to Indra does not apply to Indra. It applies only to the Supreme immanent in Indra and this is what Kṛṣṇa has proved by lifting up 'Govardhana',

6. *Venṇu pagai keḍukkum nin kaiyil vēl pōṣṭi*

"Blessed be the Vēlāyudha, the shining spear which, in your hand, is capable of subjugating and destroying enemies."

As soon as the storm of hail ceases, Kṛṣṇa sends out all the gōpālas and the cows and deposits the mountain in its original place; and then takes up the Vēlāyudha in his hand. It is this spear that the gōpas use both when they fight their enemies and when they kill the wild animals of prey while guarding their herds of cattle. In the incarnation of Rāma, the weapon wielded by Rāma and his followers is the bow; in the incarnation of Kṛṣṇa, the weapon handled by Nandagōpa and his retinue is the spear, Vēlāyudha. In their excessive love for Kṛṣṇa the gōpikas have so long praised the glory of Kṛṣṇa and sung their benediction on him. Now they fear that such lavish praise itself may work as an evil eye; and so they divert attention by saying that this glory is not the result of anything exceptionally creditable in Kṛṣṇa himself; it is the great efficacy of the weapon, Vēlāyudha, that has earned victory over his enemies; and so they bless the weapon. Kṛṣṇa's handsome arms attract the evil eye even when bare; with the weapon Vēlāyudha adorning the hand there is absolutely no escape from the evil eye. So they invoke protection on his weapon. It is quite enough if Kṛṣṇa holds the weapon. On seeing it, the enemies themselves become dispirited and get defeated and frightened to death. He need not wield it against them. It is to suggest this idea that the gōpikas say, *Un kaiyil vēl*; 'the Vēlāyudha in your hand and not the Vēlāyudha you have used against your enemies'. It is only on rare occasions when his favourite devotees stand in impending peril that he forgets, in his rage, his normal character as a gōpāla. One such occasion arises when, to save Pārtha, he breaks his pledge and plunges into the battle field armed with his disc against Bhīṣma. But normally, he does not relinquish the Vēlāyudha. Peri-Ālwār is privileged to have a direct vision of Śrīmannārāyaṇa and he pronounces benediction on the disc, *āliyum pallāṇḍū*. Likewise on seeing Śrī Rāma he blesses his bow: *Śārṅga mennum villāṇḍān tannai pallāṇḍu*. Likewise, Gōḍāḍēvi visions Lord Kṛṣṇa and invokes benediction on Vēlāyudha; *vēl pōfri*,

Lord Kṛṣṇa impresses not only as an incarnation of God but also as an exemplary āchārya (preceptor). In order that he may protect the spiritual harvests in the fertile lands of his disciples' hearts, the āchārya always holds, while giving spiritual instruction, the Vēlāyudha of Upadēśa mudra, the posture of the palm with the tips of the thumb and forefinger joined and the other fingers

stretched out. In their deep love, the gōpikas forget that this *mudra* is their Saviour, and pronounce benediction on it. The greatest favour that the Supreme confers on individual selves is, (1) bringing about the destruction of Karma, ignorance and egoism, by imparting, through the āchārya, the illuminating knowledge that all objects are instinct with Him, and that all words are His names; and (2) nullifying the residuary tastes and latent tendencies for sense-pleasures. Mindful of this great boon, the gōpikas invoke blessings on the weapon that he holds in his hand.

7. *Enṇenṇu un śēvagamē yēṭṭrippapaikoḷvān:*

“Thus and thus do we glorify your heroic exploits; we have come to obtain the ‘*paṇai*’, the musical instrument, from you”.

“We are not so ill-natured as to give up singing benediction on your exploits after we have our wish fulfilled. Our objective is realised only when we sing your heroic exploits always”. This glorification is not a means to a different end; it is an end in itself and to bring out this idea they say, *Enṇenṇu* “*thus and thus*”. Under the intoxicating influence of love, they repeat the same word again and again. This is a type of madness. Peri-Āḷwār begins with ‘*pallāṇḍu*’ and goes on repeating it till the end of his hymn of benediction. Gōḍāḍēvi, likewise, begins with “*pōṭṭi*” and unable to restrain herself repeats it six times, and still goes on uttering it. It is fear and concern for the Lord’s safety that prompts the devotees to sing the benediction. As there is no end to their nervous anxiety, there is no end to their singing the benediction, either. Such is their deep concern prompted by love that it can never be allayed; and consequently the benediction also goes on without end.

To the worldly people, a meal satisfying the six tastes of the palate gives the greatest pleasure. Similar happiness is provided to the minds of the devotees by the word ‘*pōṭṭi*’, ‘*mangalam*’; and so it is repeated six times here; 1. *aḍipōṭṭi*; 2. *tiral pōṭṭi*; 3. *pugal pōṭṭi*; 4. *kaḷal pōṭṭi*; 5. *guṇam pōṭṭi*; and 6. *vēl pōṭṭi*. The gōpikas sing about the heroic quality of the Lord, so that their fear of the enemies may abate. In the Lord’s valour lies their strength. Some may question the propriety of introducing heroic anecdotes of Vāmana and Śrī Rāma while singing the glories of Śrīkṛṣṇa. The sports indulged in by Kṛṣṇa are not dissimilar to those in other incarnations; they

all relate to the one Supreme. Yaśōda makes no such distinction; she calls Kṛṣṇa occasionally by the names of 'Vāmana' and 'Rāmachandra'. Remembering that Śrī Rāma has been borne in his mother's womb for twelve months, Yaśōda observes that she has borne Kṛṣṇa for twelve months before he is born. Making no distinctions in the incarnations is common to all of them in those days. That is why Āṇḍāl also glorifies Trivikrama in the third Pāsuram ('*Ōṅgi yulagaḷanda*') and Śrī Rāma in the fourth Pāsuram ('*śārṅgamudaitta*') and Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the fifth Pāsuram ('*āyār kula tṇil tōṇrum*'). The gōpikas approach Kṛṣṇa, expecting two favours; one for themselves, leave for the glorification of the divine story of Kṛṣṇa; and the other for the villagers, bestowal of 'paṇai' or musical instrument, needed for the ritual which brings them rain. Hence they say they have come to praise him and to take 'paṇai' from him: '*yēṣṣiparaṇai koḷvān*.'

8. *Inṇu yām vandōm iraṅgu ēlōrempāvāy*

"We have come today. Bestow your mercy on us. So long we have been under constraint, unable to secure the permission of the elders. Today we have their consent. Whether we will have this freedom tomorrow is uncertain. This day will not come again. Therefore do favour us by granting our request." The day we feel inclined towards God, that very day we must try to attain Him and make no delay. "It is we, who have come to you; we, who are worthy of enjoying you and of being enjoyed by you; we, who cannot live without attaining you; we, who cheerfully face and endure troubles and difficulties in reaching you. And note, while it is you who should come to us, we have come to you against our nature and propriety. Still, you forget your nature and remain indifferent, without coming half-way to welcome us. What we have so far accomplished does not bring us fulfilment. Your mercy alone avails as the means. We know that we ought not to have come out. But we have come to you, even because we cannot restrain ourselves from coming out. Do not get angry with us for this lapse that we have ventured out. Pray, do treat us with mercy. Neither our devotion nor our surrender to you is a means to attaining you. Your grace alone is the instrument that enables us to attain you. Once in the past you have yourself come down and taken the trouble of measuring and occupying

the world with your foot, so as to claim all the creatures as your own. We have now obviated all that strain to you by coming to you. Won't you be considerate to us! To take possession of Bhūdēvi, you have had to transform yourself as a dwarf and go abegging. To regain Sita, you have had to undergo all the strain of trudging a long distance to Lanka and vanquishing a mighty foe. Today we come to you, unable to endure the thought of giving you any trouble. Do please accept us.

Knowing that it is improper and against our nature to venture out, we have come to you unable to restrain ourselves. We have come, because we cannot endure the thought of giving you trouble to walk to us. We have come, because of the anxiety that, if we miss this opportunity, we may not get another. We also know that our coming to you does not enable us to attain you. We know that your mercy alone avails, as the only means of attaining you. It is up to you now to take us. We have no alternative. Pray, be considerate!"



PĀŚURAM XXV

PREFACE.

Lord Kṛṣṇa is highly pleased with the gōpikas, who are singing benediction, for their love and for their excellent power of expression, and tells them: “O gōpikas! you wish me all happiness, prompted by your inborn love for me. I am glad. But you have taken a lot of trouble in walking to this place in this dewy night. You say that you have come here with the sole object of singing the benediction. If you have any other wish, please let me know. I shall certainly fulfil it.” The gōpikas say in reply! “Night and dew have not given us any trouble as we are engaged in singing about your attributes. Our main objective is to sing you benediction. Should you like to help us, give us the musical instrument needed for the rite that we are performing for the benefit of mankind. We know our nature and your nature; so we are content with singing you benediction.” Thus they tell him that they know the secret of his incarnation.

In the Fourth Chapter of the Gīta, knowledge of the secret of incarnation is mentioned as one of the means of attaining God, along with Karma Yōga, Bhakti Yōga, Jñāna Yōga and Prapatti Yōga. In Pāśuram XXIII it has been elucidated that the Causal Phenomenon manifests itself as the objective world; and thus all objects are instinct with the spirit of God. Nothing can exist without Him. In Pāśuram XXIV the gōpikas establish that all words and sounds intimately concern Him and that therefore singing His benediction is the highest end worthy of pursuit. In this Pāśuram, they disclose that they know Kṛṣṇa to be that Supreme Being.

It is not possible to attain God with this body and in this mundane world. This can happen only in the Infinite Space (Paramavyōma) or in the Heavenly Abode (Paramapada), names by which Śrī Vaikunṭha is known. Then how can those illustrious persons, who cannot live without attaining God, endure in this world? It is with this consideration that God, besides pervading

everywhere as the Immanent One, mercifully incarnates in this material world in a divine body unconnected with primordial substance, and without giving up His nature and attributes, with which He abides in the Heavenly Abode. When He thus descends to us, we cannot distinguish Him as He will be one amongst us. Only those great saints, who regard every moment of separation from Him as an endless eon, will be able, by His grace, to discern Him. It is for such saintly people that the Birthless One takes birth. To the unfortunate ones He appears as a human being; and so they hate Him and get destroyed like the insects that fall into the fire. The saints know Him as God in human form and gain salvation thereby. Remaining in this material world, it is possible for the people to experience the Supreme with all His auspicious attributes, only in His incarnations and in the Adorable idols in temples. Those who deserve His grace know the secret of His incarnation, and consequently they will have fulfilment of their wishes and freedom from unwanted things here itself. Those who fail to apprehend the secret of the incarnation and those who scorn it go to ruin. Those who are indifferent are carried away by the current of their own works (Karma). Lord Kṛṣṇa teaches Arjuna this very truth when he says:

*“Janma karmacha mē divyamēvam yō vētti tattvataḥ
Tyaktvā dēham punarjanmanaiti māmēti sōrjuna:*

Those who truly know my divine birth and works will have experienced me in this birth; and after they shed their mortal coil, they will have no more births. They will abide with me.” The Upaniṣads declare: “*ajāyamāno bahuthā vijāyatē*: Though by nature unborn, He takes birth in manifold ways.” “*Sau śrēyān bhavati jāyamānaḥ*: That Supreme Self by His sheer will takes birth; and purveys or becomes the Good.” Thus the Supreme has no janma; and commits no karma. Out of consideration for us and unable to endure the sight of our ruin, the Supreme manifests Himself, now and then, in this world of Primordial Nature. He does so by His own will and without giving up His nature, and in a divine body that is not influenced by Prakṛti. As He is born like us and moves amidst us, enjoying food and bed and other sense-pleasures, we, the common people, are unable to understand His incarnations. Those who know the secret of His birth and deeds attain Him here and now, and enjoy the fruits of such attainment.

In a similar way, those who know the secret of the Deity adored in the temple realise the fruit of attaining Him. The gōpikas earn salvation because they know the secret of Lord Kṛṣṇa's incarnation. Gōdādēvi knows the secret of the Adored Deity and obtains salvation. Those who have attained full spiritual experience in the glorious Incarnations and in the Adored Deities, earn liberation while alive. The gōpikas glorify the secret of Kṛṣṇa's birth and say that thereby they feel happy that their tribulation has come to an end.

The form of the Adored Deity presents itself in the heart by chanting the incantation into which initiation is given by the āchārya. The Supreme Phenomenon, which is beyond reach, becomes easily accessible to those who love It; to the gōpikas in the form of Kṛṣṇa and to Gōdādēvi in the form of the Adored Deity, Śrī Ranganātha. By constant meditation on the meaning of the Mantra, the Form will become manifest before our hearts. Only when we experience this secret can we attain God, even while we are in this material world. That is what the gōpikas know and experience; and that is why they sing of Kṛṣṇa's birth. So far they have sung about Kṛṣṇa's destruction of Pūtana, Śakaṭā-sura and other such miraculous exploits. Now they sing about the birth of Kṛṣṇa and the destruction of Kamsa.

It is surprising that the Supreme Self who has no limitations and who is the Perfect. One and the Sole Ordainer should appear as an imperfect person, subject to limitations and liable to be ordered about as one in the pageant of His own creation. Bound by our Karma, we suffer the sorrows of life beginning even in the womb before birth. How very astonishing that He chooses to undergo the same miseries of birth—all out of love for us! The Ālwārs have thought along these lines; and reflecting on the way in which Kṛṣṇa has incarnated and grown, and charmed by His overflowing love, they have often fallen into a swoon. The gōpikas, likewise, lose themselves in happiness when they come to think of the manner of Kṛṣṇa's birth. It is not mere infatuation for Kṛṣṇa that the gōpikas feel; it is love inspired by knowledge. Knowing Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme who has come down to earth so as to be easily accessible, the gōpikas wonder at the consideration and pity he shows them for the trouble they have undergone in walking a few steps to reach him. Their trouble is an infinitesimal part of the trouble he has taken for them.

*Orutti maganāy piṇandu, ōriravil
 orutti maganāy oḷittu vaḷara
 tarikkilānāgi ttān tiṅguninainda
 karuttai ppiḷaippittu kañcan vayittil
 neruppenna ninṛa neḍumālē! unnai
 aruttittuvandōm; paṛaitarudiyāgil
 tiruttakka ṣelvamum ṣevagamum yāmpāḍi
 varuttamum tirndu magiḷndelō rempāvāy.*

Summary.

O Kṛṣṇa! In fulfilment of the wish of peerless Dēvakidēvi that she should become the mother of Bhagavān, you took birth as her son, holding the conch and the disc, and the mace and the lotus, in your four hands. On that very night after birth, you became the son of Yaśōda, that lady of unequalled glory who enjoyed to the fullest extent all your miraculous sports as a child, and who had the privilege of binding and chastising and controlling you. While you thus grew clandestinely in Vrēpalle, you foiled every evil attempt designed by the envious and wicked Kamsa; and becoming a thorn in his side, you killed the man who wished to kill you. You are extremely fond of those who seek your protection; knowing this, we have come desiring you alone. If you are so pleased, give us the 'paṛai.' Fatigue yields place to bliss, when we sing of your magnificent affluence, which Lakṣmi herself might covet, and of your many heroic exploits.

Commentary.

1. *Orutti maganāy piṇandu* :

“Born^ras son to one woman”

The gōpikas refer to the birth of Kṛṣṇa as the son of Dēvakidēvi. One man, Daśaratha, becomes the father of four sons, Rāma and his brothers, as a result of his fasting, penance and sacrificial rites. Four people by their austerities claim one as their son; the four are Dēvaki and Vasudēva, Yaśōda and Nanda: and the son is Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Rāma is born as any other human being; and so Kausalya is an ordinary mother. But Dēvaki is

unique among mothers as she begets the Supreme Person Himself without any change. She carries in her womb 'The One without a Second,' the 'Ultimate Cause'; and thus becomes the one without a second, the one without an equal among mothers. The gōpikas refer to Dēvaki as 'Orutti, a woman,' following the tradition that adorable persons should not be mentioned by name. Dēvaki is privileged to have as her son the Mother and Father of all the worlds and all the elements. The Ordainer and Lord of the entire creation chooses to become her son, so as to fulfil her wish; in fact, He considers that being known as 'Dēvaki's son' is a feather in His cap, a mark of great distinction. Ignoring His nature as the Unborn, he prepares to undergo the sorrows of life in the womb in the same way as those bound by Karma. This is different from descending to the earth expeditiously to save Gajēndra; and from bursting forth from a Pillar to save Prahlāda from peril. The gōpikas are astounded at the immensity of his love for his devotees. The expression 'born as son' suggests that he is an obedient son. Rāma is well-known for his strict adherence to his father's words. But he is already grown up, educated and wise, when he displays this virtue of honouring his father's words. But Kṛṣṇa carries out the command of his parents the moment he is born, when they want him to withdraw from his form the arms holding the conch and the disc. How implicit is his obedience!"

2. *Ōriravil orutti maganāy oḷittu vaḷara :*

"Becoming the son of another woman the same night, and growing up in secret". Denied the privilege that ordinary children have, he is carried soon after birth on the same night to a different place to become the child of a different couple. That night too is 'without a second' in the same way as Dēvaki and Yaśōda are without equals. That is the night when the Supreme Lord has descended into the region of Primeval Nature with conch and disc, symbols of His supremacy, on His person. That is the night when Lord Kṛṣṇa has arisen dispersing darkness and breaking the fetters not only of his parents in the prison but also of all those bound and grovelling in darkness. That is the night when the river Yamuna has parted, yielding a way. That is the night when Lord Kṛṣṇa who is to kill Kamsa has seen light. This is a unique night, the like of which has not appeared before and will not appear hereafter.

Kṛṣṇa experiences the sad lot of not enjoying even one night at the place of his birth. There is no scope of his parents' sharing the good news even with a few, let alone the rejoicings of a public ceremonial connected with child-birth. Look at the misfortune that the Supreme Lord undergoes for our sake. When He descends into the region of Primeval Nature, our Karma brings Him down to a par with us. When we ascend to His region of everlasting glory, His mercy lifts us to a par with Him. Our birth takes us away from Him. His birth brings us close to Him. If we become aware that His birth is for our sake only, the fetters of our birth break off of their own accord, in the same way as those binding the legs of Dēvaki and Vasudēva have fallen off. One who exists everlastingly, One who lives in a region beyond the jurisdiction of time, comes into a world that is subject to the power of time and at a time which lends itself to be specified as night.

Born thus, Kṛṣṇa immediately changes into the son of Yaśōda. Though he is only brought up by Yaśōda, he behaves as if he is born of her. Though born as the son of Dēvaki, he has not cried there nor has he sucked her breasts. It is only after he reaches Yaśōda's side that he cries and sucks milk from her breasts. It is more appropriate, therefore, to call him the son of Yaśōda. Kṛṣṇa considers Pūtana, who has come in mother's disguise, as his own mother and sucks milk from her bosom with great gusto of love. Will he not regard Yaśōda as his mother when, with great love, she takes him on her lap and fondles him as her own and suckles him with all her heart ?

Among the mothers of Bhagavān, Yaśōda is greater than even Dēvaki. It is Yaśōda that has enjoyed to the full the sweet pranks, pastimes and sports of Kṛṣṇa from his childhood till he has grown to sixteen years of age. It is she that has commanded the Supreme Commander of the universe. It is she that has threateningly bound to a wooden mortar the Lord who binds and punishes all sentient beings. It is she that provides him with a stick and the lunch-basket and orders him to take due care of cows and graze them in the woods. It is she who eagerly looks forward to his return; and who rejoices when she sees the boy return with his soft shining hair covered with dust. It is she that loses herself in happiness and flatters her good fortune that she alone is 'the

mother, and none in the world can stand comparison with her. That is why the gōpikas refer to her as 'orutti' "some woman". It is Yaśōda's good fortune that gets reflected on Nanda and makes him the father. Vasudēva whose hand has been clasped in marriage by Dēvaki has not received such fortune as Nanda, whose hand has been held by Yaśōda in wedlock. When visitors ask Kṛṣṇa, while swinging him in the cradle, who his father is, Kṛṣṇa looks at Nanda and in a halting way, stammers the words, "That is father". It seems Dēvaki has felt miserable that she and Vasudēva have not had that privilege. How exceptional is Yaśōda's good fortune!

Kamsa was dead long ago. But Gōḍāḍēvi fears him so much that she hesitates to mention as whose son Kṛṣṇa is born and as whose son he is brought up. So she says that he is born the son of 'one woman' and is brought up by 'another woman'. He is not privileged to remain at the place of his birth. It is not given to him at least to grow freely and happily, without being shrouded by secrecy, in the place to which he is brought. Nanda and his people take measures to hide him from the sight of demons, lest he should come by danger. Despite their precautions in bringing him up in secrecy, they are unable to obviate dangers. Yaśōda is so alert in protecting her son that she refuses to show him even to the immortals who, knowing him to be the Supreme Lord, come from the celestial realms to see him of all this because of her fear-danger to him. When she is so cautious about showing the child to known friends, will she ever allow him to be shown to opponents? When any one calls, Yaśōda tells him that Kṛṣṇa is out, even though he happens to be in the house. Such is the secrecy in which he is brought up. The gōpikas feel unhappy that One who has descended to the world so as to be freely enjoyed by His devotees has had to be brought up in such utmost secrecy. How disconcerting! Mantra (incantation) is the mother of Bhagavān. In the same way as the infant nestles close in the mother's womb, Bhagavān who cannot be confined within limits and who is beyond the reach of words or mind, becomes subservient to Mantra. Kṛṣṇa has two mothers, Dēvaki and Yaśōda. Likewise, there are two principal incantations: Nārāyaṇa Aṣṭākṣari and Vāsudēva Dvādaśākṣari. Of all the names applied to God, there are two which indicate His all-pervasiveness—Vāsudēva and Nārāyaṇa. That is why Śrī Śankara, too, elucidates the meaning of the term

Bhagavān by making use of the words 'Nārāyaṇa' and 'Vāsudēva' only. "Nāra" means "all the everlasting objects" and "Ayaṇa" means 'Support.' Thus 'Nārāyaṇa' means 'the support of all objects.' It is the Supreme Brahma who supports all objects and who is immanent in them; and that Supreme presents Himself in Narayaṇa Mantra. That Mantra is Dēvaki. The Supreme Self is born of Dēvaki with all His heavenly symbols in tact. In the same way, through Nārāyaṇa Mantra are propounded the nature and form and all the attributes and glories of the Supreme Self. Yaḥoda is Vāsudēva dvādaśākṣari. In this mantra, the God-phenomenon does not manifest Itself so clearly as in Nārāyaṇa-Mantra. But this mantra is easily accessible to all. The same Supreme who is so explicitly declared in the term 'Nārāyaṇa' is presented implicitly in the term 'Vāsudēva.' The Supreme has descended into this world, making Himself submissive to these two incantations.

It might also be said that one of the two mantras is Gāyatri and the other Nārāyaṇaśṭākṣari. It is Nārāyaṇa who penetrates through the orb of the sun, that is worshipped in Gāyatri. He becomes manifest in the globe of the sun which is directly visible to us, in the same way as He has appeared before Dēvaki with conch and disc in His hands. The same God is propounded in Nārāyaṇa aṣṭākṣari also. But in this mantra there is no visible outward manifestation; the same form shines but within our hearts and so appears to be growing in secret. The Supreme shines immanent in the self; and the self resides in the body. Thus the Supreme lies hidden in the body and protects the self. Becoming submissive to Primeval Nature, the self behaves like the mad son, who attempts to kill the mother, because she has come in the way of his killing himself. The fond mother avoids appearing before her son lest he should kill her; at the same time, she keeps alert and by some device manages to save him from killing himself. If the Supreme appears before the self, the latter will try to kill Him; if He does not, the latter will kill himself. So the Supreme, becoming immanent, keeps an alert watch on the self. The self imagines that he is independent in all affairs; and this is sheer madness. Fearing this mad self, the Supreme lies hidden as the immanent. In a similar way, Lord Kṛṣṇa grows hidden under the care of Yaḥoda.

3. *Tarikkilā nāgittān tingu ninainda karuttaippiḷaippittu.*

“ Foiling the evil designs of the envious and malignant Kamsa ”- Kamsa does not directly see Kṛṣṇa; nor does Kṛṣṇa appear before him. Yet hearing from Nārada that his enemy is growing up in Vrāpalle, Kamsa is unable to endure the very thought of it. Egoism is the attachment to the body; it is the result of identifying the body with the soul. Kamsa is that egoism. Egoism cannot put up with the very mention of the Supreme. Nārada and his ilk are the sages. When they say that the Supreme Being exists, egoism becomes furious at that very thought and attempts to kill Him. Kamsa finds no security in the thought that Kṛṣṇa can do no harm without coming before him. And should Kṛṣṇa appear before him, could not Kamsa, equipped as he is with all the wings of armed forces in trim, see the end of him? No, he does not feel that assurance. He is, indeed, very much upset. The individual self, filled to the brim with egoism, suffers a similar disturbance. He learns from sages that one who is to kill him is growing up in secret. He hears that the Supreme lies immanent in his soul which is quite different from his body. He has only heard of Him, not seen Him. But the individual self fears that, if the Supreme exists, there may come a time when he will be no more. That is why he cannot endure the thought of His existence. As his is all demoniac plenitude, he attempts to kill the Supreme by employing evil devices and wicked machinations. The attempts of Kamsa to kill Kṛṣṇa are no other than the outrages and offences perpetrated by the egoistic self on God and God's devotees. Kamsa himself wants to attack Kṛṣṇa and kill him, unmindful of the great disparity between him, a fox, and Kṛṣṇa, the lion. Out of their love for Kṛṣṇa the gōpikas cannot bring themselves to utter the blunt truth that Kamsa “ thinks of killing ” Kṛṣṇa; instead, they say that he ‘ designs evil for him.’

The word ‘ ninainda ’ (thought of) has a special significance. God does not punish us, even when we abuse Him with words or perform deeds hostile to Him. A child sometimes abuses his parents; sometimes even beats them in peevishness. But his mind does not harbour hatred of parents. The parents know that; and so, they tolerate the child's behaviour in speech and deed as only impulsive and capricious outbursts. Likewise, God ignores our words and our actions and does not punish so long

as we do not harbour illwill in our minds against Him. Before He punishes, He makes His investigation till He reaches our minds and makes sure that we deserve to be punished. But when he has to save, a mere word is enough. Even if the cry for protection comes from the lips and not from the heart, He hastens to give succour. Kamsa has not only committed an outrage against Kṛṣṇa in words and deeds, but also harboured animosity in his mind and kept it fully engaged with evil designs against him. So Kṛṣṇa has no alternative but to punish him. Kamsa plans to invite his nephew to the Dhanur Yāga and arrange for him a bout with his wrestlers. And when, as he hopes, Kṛṣṇa is killed in it, he will, as his uncle, pretend grief and mourn his death. He manoeuvres Kṛṣṇa's death in this way so that the people may be kept in the dark about his own wicked complicity. Kṛṣṇa manages to turn the scheme topsyturvy. He kills, without effort, the wrestlers in the forecourt and attacks and kills his maternal uncle and laments for his death. He who thinks of putting an end to God-Phenomenon will himself be put to an end to. If he admits Its existence and submits to It, he exists for ever. Śrī Kṛṣṇa has disclosed this secret in this episode of Kamsa's death.

4. *Kañcan vayittil neruppenna ninṛa neḍumālē:*

“Becoming a thorn in Kamsa's side, you have stood out as the fond supporter of your suppliants.”

The women of Mathura and the gōpikas of Vrēpalle are constantly consumed by worry that Kṛṣṇa may come to harm under the evil machinations of Kamsa. What Kṛṣṇa has done is to give relief to his suppliants by transferring their burning anxiety to Kamsa himself, where it rages till it consumes him in its flames. It is said that Ānjanēya has not destroyed Lanka with elemental fire. He has taken the flame of Sīta's grief and employed it to consume Lanka. Similarly, Kṛṣṇa has taken away the fire of anxiety from the minds of his suppliants and deposited it in Kamsa's mind so that it may consume him. When people in their arrogant egoism and crass ignorance are unable to tolerate the existence of God and make attempts to destroy Him, the great devotees, who deeply cherish Him, feel absolutely miserable in their hearts. The Lord cannot stand the sight of His devotees undergoing agony. It is only to relieve them of their anguish

that He takes measures to exterminate those who deny His existence. It is not true that He gets wild with those who persecute Him. In fact, He is not worried even if they threaten to kill Him. What moves Him is His keen sensitiveness to the misery felt by His devotees and suppliants, on account of their fear about His safety. He, who is the Soothing Balm to the hearts of his suppliants, becomes the Consuming Fire in the hearts of their opponents. The agony that rages in the hearts of His suppliants is not for themselves or on their own account; but is caused by their love for Him. So He feels for them; and as their anguish increases His anger grows; and He becomes a raging Fire, consuming those who deny Him. But He ever remains a refreshing dark cloud to His devotees. The women folk of Mathura, climbing to their balconies, betray consternation at the sight of the boy Kṛṣṇa preparing to fight Kamsa. In their concern for Kṛṣṇa's safety, they grieve that such unequal fight is not forbidden. But Kṛṣṇa soon sets at rest their anxious fear by putting Kamsa to death. Long before Kṛṣṇa shows his miraculous prowess to his parents, Dēvaki and Vasudēva, he has chosen to give glimpses of it to his devotees. Such is his intense fondness for them.

5. *Unnai aruttittu vandōm:*

"We have come here desiring you." When the gōpikas thus declare the secret of Kṛṣṇa's incarnation, Kṛṣṇa asks them what he is expected to do. The gōpikas reply that they want nothing from him. They do not want him to take birth again; nor do they want him to grow clandestinely; nor need he kill another Kamsa. They do not wish to give him any such trouble; nor are they interested in seeing any more of his sportive exploits. They are content with seeing him. They have come desiring only him. They have not come to him to seek some favour; nor are they like those who turn away from him after receiving the favours they have sought at his hands. They know that Kṛṣṇa has come all the way from the Heavenly Abode (Vaikunṭha) to show himself even to those who do not seek him and make them his adherents, so that ultimately he may become amenable to their control. The gōpikas have come there fully aware of his magnanimity. They know how excessive his fondness is for his devotees, even without their ever asking for his love. The gōpikas have come now to implore his love and thus make his infatuation for them ampler and more intense.

It is his infatuation for his devotees that has made him undergo severe troubles; namely, to descend from Vaikuṇṭha and be born to one mother without any change in form; and to grow under the care of a different mother; and finally to destroy Kamsa. The gōpikas have walked all the way to his place to demonstrate that their love for him is deeper than his fondness for them. They seem to suggest that in giving up their natural feminine feelings of self-respect and modesty in leaving their homes and walking up to him, they have proved how many times their infatuation for him excels his fondness for them.

6. *Paṛai tarudiyā gil:*

“Give us, if you will, the musical instrument ‘paṛai,’ required for the ritual—and grant this request only if you are so pleased.”

Lord Kṛṣṇa points out the contradiction in their pleas: “Yesterday, you said you had come here seeking ‘paṛai’ from me. Today, you say you have come only for me. Why this self-contradiction!” Pat comes the reply: “Is our asking for a thing the occasion for your giving? You give because it is your will (Sankalpa) to do so. How can we ask and for what shall we ask?” It is not our wish, but His will, that brings about fulfilment. As sentient beings, we have certain cravings, which are the outcome of our consciousness. But it is idle to think that the craving itself can secure fulfilment. The Supreme Lord, who is completely free and independent, may vouchsafe some thing which we have not sought. We are bound to accept it, even if we think that it comes in the way of our service to Him. To the gōpikas who have come to Kṛṣṇa desiring him only, the ritual that they perform for the benefit of the people is indeed an obstacle to the fulfilment of their desire. That is why, they say that they will receive the ‘paṛai,’ only if he condescends to give it. If then he gives it, they will, by receiving it, be only obeying his command. If they reject it, they will be guilty of acting independently which again is against their nature to do. For this reason, they say that they will take the ‘paṛai,’ if only Kṛṣṇa chooses to give it.

7. *Tiruttakka ḍelvamum ḍevagamum yām pāḍi varuttamun
tirndu magliṇdu ḍlōrempāvāy :*

“We are relieved of the strain and are enjoying bliss by singing about your heroic exploits and about your magnificent affluence which Lakṣmi herself might covet.” Kṛṣṇa feels elated with what the gōpikas have said. Then he remarks with loving concern: “I understand what you mean. But you have taken so much trouble in coming here in this dewy night. What a pity!” The gōpikas assure him: “We feel no strain at all, absolutely nothing. We have walked here singing about your heroism and magnificence. To the pilgrims, who tread the way to God, glorification of His sweet name is the accompanying nectarine sustenance: *Pāthēyam Puṇḍarikākṣa nāma samkīrtanāmṛtam*. You are the Lord of Śrī. Is not the wealth thereby derived meant to redeem our fatigue and give us happiness? While all the people in the world hanker after her, she has chosen to seek your asylum. So you are the “Śrīyaḥ Śrīḥ,” “Lakṣmi of Lakṣmi.” Your affluence is such that Lakṣmi herself covets it. That gives us happiness; and we have come glorifying it in our song. It is not enough for one to have wealth or to have the deities who possess it. One must have heroism to protect them from plunder. You have the valour that can liquidate the enemies that confront us and those deities. We have come here, musing on your exploits all the way. Denied the privilege of uttering your name so long, owing to the intransigence of the elders, we have now taken occasion to glorify your name to our delight, while they are listening, while they are present. Glorifying your valour and magnificence has relieved us of the grief occasioned by long separation from you.” In the stage of God-experience, sorrow disappears, yielding place to bliss. Likewise, in the stage of establishing contact with Him, in glorifying His name, grief vanishes and happiness rises in its place. So the gōpikas say:.. “We do not suffer from fatigue. Bliss fills our hearts.”

By listening to the anecdotes of God’s valour and heroism, we feel redeemed of fear and of trouble from our enemies. This freedom from fear relieves us of fatigue. By singing about His magnificence and His attributes of strength, sovereignty, valour, magnanimity and the like, and about His control over resources as the Consort of Lakṣmi, and about His irresistible power as, Ordainer—we find an immense accession to our bliss. During the period of cultivation of the mind for access to God, many

troubles and difficulties crop up. They should be regarded not as troubles but as the inevitable concomitants of penance. To attain to this equable state, the only expedient worth practising is Nāmasankīrtana, the chanting of God's name. This is what the gōpikas have striven to establish in this Pāsuram.



PREFACE

Delighted with the words of the gōpikas, Lord Kṛṣṇa feels absorbed in the contemplation of their beauty. The sight of their radiant complexions and beaming eyes, of their prominent bosoms and slender waists, intoxicates him with so much infatuation that he becomes insensitive to all other objects. He desires to hear more of their honeyed words. So he raises a doubt for clarification: "You say you have come here desiring me only. How is it then that you ask me to give you the 'paṇai,' if I choose to? Those who aspire for me do not have any other wish. What then is your intention in asking for it?" Those who surrender themselves to God with the firm conviction that God is both the means and the end, should entertain no other wish, should perform no other rite. "*Bhagavat pravr̥tti virōdhi swapravṛtti nivṛtti prapatti:*" Prapatti (complete surrender) is defined as giving up of all activities connected with ourselves, that come in the way of God's endeavours in our behalf. Those who abide in self-surrender should renounce all activity. Should the gōpikas, who have surrendered themselves to God with the faith that He is the means and the end, undertake to perform any rite? This is the question to be answered. A sage who abides in the knowledge of the self and of the Supreme Self renounces all rituals. A suppliant for grace (*prapanna*) does not give up rituals as such; he performs the rites but in a different spirit altogether. He performs the conventional rites, established by tradition, in the spirit that God Himself has been making him His instrument in performing these rites as His service and for His pleasure. Complete renunciation of all rites is not for him. For him, renunciation consists in giving up the idea that he is doing anything for himself. The gōpikas have undertaken to perform the rite, only as consecrated service to Him. So they answer the question posed by Kṛṣṇa: "Lord! this rite has the sanctity of tradition and usage. The performance of this rite helps us to meet you, to look at your radiant face publicly and to glorify your auspicious names. Any rite is to be rejected, if it works as an

obstacle to our contact with you. We have undertaken this rite in gratitude to the elders who have permitted us to do it; and particularly because it helps us to come openly into contact with you". Then Kṛṣṇa feels satisfied and enquires: "What is this rite? What is the authority behind it? What are the prerequisites? How many of each requisite have to be procured? Give full details". Then the gōpikas present a list of their requirements for this mārگاśīrṣavrata. This ritual of the bath in the month of mārگاśīrṣa, according to the opinion of the elders in Vrēpalle, is to be performed with the object of getting rain. But in the opinion of the gōpikas, attaining union with Kṛṣṇa itself constitutes the ceremonial bath. To get immersed in the experience of God, which is the greatest and the most effective of all means of liberation, constitutes the bath for the gōpikas. In this Pāsuram, the gōpikas list out the materials required for this rite—those required for the performance of the external ritual as conceived by the elders and also those needed for the internal immersion in spiritual experience as understood by themselves.

*Māle ! maṇivaṇṇā ! mārگاḷinirāḍuvān;
 melaiyār śeyvanagaḷ ! vēṇḍuvanakeṭṭiyēl
 ṇālattai yellām naḍuṅga muralvana
 pālanna vaṇṇattu un pāñcaśanniyamē
 pōlvana śaṅgaṅgaḷ, pōyppāḍuḍaiyanave,
 śālapperum paṛaiyē, pallāṇḍiśaippārē
 kōlaviḷakkē, koḍiyē, vitāname,
 ālinilaiyāy ! aruḷēlōrempāvāy.*

Summary.

You who have an excessive fondness for supplicants! You who have the brightness and the innate nature of a sapphire! You who, by your capacity to make the impossible possible, have lain compressed in a small fig-leaf! Intent on the Mārگاśīrṣa bath, we have come to you seeking the materials required for it. This ritual of the bath was performed by our ancestors and learned religious men. If you are pleased to give ear, we shall relate the particulars of our requirements. We want conchs resembling your Pāñchajanya, white as milk in colour, and capable of producing a sound that makes the earth quake. We want 'paṛais,' broad big-sized percussion instruments, used for drumming.

We want bands of devotees to sing the benediction. We want auspicious wick-stands. We want flagstaves and awnings. Do favour us with all these requisites."

Commentary.

1. *Mālē*:

"You, who have an exceeding fondness for your supplicants:"

So long, the *gōpikas* who are moved by exceeding love for Kṛṣṇa are uncertain about Kṛṣṇa's attitude towards them. On seeing Kṛṣṇa, they conclude from his looks and facial expressions, that he is in fact moved by a greater fondness for them than they have for him. There can be no comparison, in truth, between his love which is broad and deep as the sea and theirs which is narrow and shallow as a small pool. He looks as fondness personified. It is surprising how he could, with all that tender affection, contain himself till they happen to come to him. The idea does not strike him that he may himself perform a rite that will enable him to win the *gōpikas*. Because his mind is so distraught with their absence that he is almost paralysed—unable to think, unable to act. The *gōpikas* are cleverer; they have at last launched upon a rite that takes them to him. But Kṛṣṇa has lost the power to think. Until the *gōpikas* come to him and awaken him, he lies still, unmindful of himself and of his surroundings. Of such maddening intensity is his infatuation for them! The *gōpikas* who have till then addressed him as *Nārāyaṇa* (Indweller of all), *Kṣīrasāgara śayana*, (The one who rests on the ocean of milk), and *Dēvādīdēva* (God of gods), and glorified his unlimited and indivisible Absoluteness, now address him as the "Embodiment of fondness!" Till then, they have thought of him as the Infinite Absolute. But that is an attribute assumed. His natural and principal characteristic, they now learn, is his exceeding fondness for his supplicants. So they address him "*mālē*." Speaking of the outstanding characteristic of ŚrīRāma, Sītā observes that he is well-known for his protection of all who seek his succour. This is his main characteristic; and other virtues come next. *Viditassahi dharmajñāḥ āraṇāgatavatsalaḥ*. The *gōpikas* say of Kṛṣṇa that fondness for supplicants is his primary natural quality; and the other qualities are ascribed to him.

In the Rāmāyaṇa, Śrī Rāma's concern for his supplicants receives wide recognition; and in the Mahābhārata, Śrī Kṛṣṇa's excessive fondness for his devotees becomes widely known. Vibhīṣaṇa is filled with apprehension that Rāma might not give him protection, as he is the brother of Rāvaṇa. Rāma, on the other hand, feels honoured that if not Rāvaṇa himself, at least his brother has sought his protection. If Rāvaṇa has himself come, Rāma will have, indeed, been more delighted. Sita wants Hanumān to tell Rāma that she will not be able to survive beyond a month in her wretched state of separation from Rāma. When Hanumān conveys the message to Rāma, the latter remarks: "Sita may survive for a month! But I cannot live even for a moment away from her." Such is Rāma's overwhelming love for his devotee. Likewise, Kṛṣṇa's excessive fondness for those who hanker after him, is made abundantly clear in the Mahābhārata, particularly in the episodes where, setting aside his greatness, he takes upon himself the humble duties of a messenger and a charioteer, all out of his concern for the Pāṇḍavas. Again, when we see to what straits the Supreme Lord submits in His efforts to get at the Āḷwārs, we know how deeply He loves them. In comparison, the struggles of the Āḷwārs to reach Him pale into insignificance.

While the gōpikas are struggling, uncertain of attaining Nārāyaṇa, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is born of one woman but brought up by another, has come into their midst with the definite purpose of being with them. What has made him grow clandestinely in Vrēpalle is not the fear of Kamsa. The secrecy is maintained only to avoid the risk of having to be separated from the gōpikas. Himself appearing mad in love, he drives others mad, thus bringing them on to a par with him. Such is the peculiar madness of Kṛṣṇa. Seeing Kṛṣṇa's intense fondness for them, the gōpikas lose themselves in mad infatuation for him. Kṛṣṇa asks them: "How do you know that I am fond of you?" Their answer is ready: "Lord, your appearance is not such as to belie your innate nature; it shows it as it is."

2. Maṇivaṇṇā!

"You, who shine with the colour and brightness of sapphire!

In the same way as an object placed inside a cabinet made of gems becomes clearly visible from outside, the excessive fondness

of Kṛṣṇa's heart becomes crystal-clear as it projects itself on his outward form. The radiance of his body is similar to that of the precious sapphire; and it is this charming, bewitching form and figure that has maddened the gōpikas with love. Not merely the gopikas; even Mahālakṣmī who is born in a lotus is likewise afflicted. That is why, she is reluctant to leave him; she has made his bosom her permanent home. In fact, those who see the beauty of his body, cannot give him up, even if he has no love for them, even if he cruelly persecutes them. Can there be any one whose beauty is so enrapturing as to captivate one of his excelling charm and become worthy of being enjoyed by him? There is none. Then of whom is he so fond? 'Mālē' also means 'the unexcelled person' (atyadhika). The Ever-wise (nitya sūras) in the Heavenly Abode surround Him with garlands in their hands and vie with one another in offering service to Him. From this, it is clear that He is the unexcelled Lord and Ordainer.

'Maṇivannā' might be understood (i) as the person who has the brightness of a gem; and (ii) as the person who is like a gem in his innate nature. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is like a gem in his innate nature. Though a gem is invaluable, it can easily be carried, tied to the hem of a garment. Likewise, though Kṛṣṇa possesses greatness which is beyond the power of mind and speech to comprehend and express, he appears as thief of fresh butter and as a philanderer of gōpikas; and thereby becomes so light as to be fastened to the edge of a woman's garment. This apart, Kṛṣṇa possesses all the qualities that a gem has:

1. The person who possesses a gem considers himself alive so long as he has the gem. If the gem is lost, he deems himself dead. We are familiar in this world with people who consider themselves alive when they have wealth; and dead when they lose it. Śrī Kṛṣṇa makes those who have him rich; and renders those who lose him poor.

2. People prostrate themselves before the person who has the gem and offer him salutations. The world humbles itself before the rich. The world likewise, submits to the person who has the Kṛṣṇa-gem in his possession.

3. The gem is worn only by kings and others who know its glory and precious value. The common people find it useful;

they can sell it and make a living out of it. To those who know its value, it is invaluable. To those who are ignorant of its worth, it is of paltry value. Likewise, the subject of God gives bliss to those who know its value and experience it and enjoy its sweetness. To those who wish to make a living out of it by imparting it to others, it serves to bring them wealth. To those who know its worth, it is invaluable. To others who are ignorant of its value, it is worthless. The gem cannot be of any use to itself. It can be of use to others only. God has no use for Himself; He can be helpful only to others. He who earns the gem as his own does not wish to part with it; nor does he wish to have in its place something different. Likewise, one, who can claim God as one's own, does not hanker after different things. Thus there are several similarities between a gem and God; and so the gōpikas address Kṛṣṇa as "Maṇivaṇṇa."

3. *Mārgaḷi nīrāḍuvān*

"Intent on the ritual of Mārgaśīrṣa bath, we have come to ask for the materials required for it." Thus the gōpikas make a submission about the purpose of their visit. The ritual of mārگاśīrṣa bath finds its fulfilment in attaining Kṛṣṇa, yet they have intended it for securing rain for the people. Those who have faith in God and who cling to God as the only means to reaching Him, have in fact no need to follow the prescribed spiritual exercises. Yet they perform them lest theistic faith should perish and lest others should copy their example of non-conformity. And they perform them as consecrated services to the Lord. Though the gōpikas have attained Kṛṣṇa, they explain that they are performing the rite for the sake of the people.

Kṛṣṇa raises a series of questions: "Where is this rite laid down for observance and on what authority? Does it find mention in the Vēdas in the same way as jyotiṣṭoma and some other sacrificial rites, performed with the object of reaching heaven, do? Is this rite prescribed in the Vēdas as some other injunctions like "engage yourself in meditation," "do worship," which are laid down for aspirants for liberation?" The gōpikas reply thus: "We are not the people to perform rites desiring fulfilment of wishes, like those who do them for getting into heaven. Though we wish for liberation, we do not think of meditation or worship as means to it.

We have firm conviction that Nārāyaṇa alone should bestow on us the fruit of our effort. This rite is in conformity with established practice and hoary tradition, which is of greater authority than the Vēdas and other scriptures: *Dharmajña samayaḥ pramāṇam vēdāścha*: The Dharma Śāstras declare that the conventions and practices of those who know dharma and practise it are the greatest authority. The Vēdas serve only to elucidate those practices.

The preceptor gives some instructions to the disciples after completion of training; and in that context tells them that when a doubt arises about any particular rite or way of conduct, they should clear it by consulting the usages and practices established by the erudite ancients. The authority behind the gōpikas' ritual has this strength of long-established practice.

4. *mēlaiyūr śeyvanagaḷ*

“Our ancestors have performed this rite.”

If we are asked to believe a certain thing because some one has said it, we hesitate as we are not sure that doing it will yield the desired result. But if we are told that some one has done a particular thing and obtained the desired result, we are prone to believe it and act with a sense of certainty. Hence it is that the practices in vogue adopted by erudite scholars are considered as having greater validity and authority than the Vēda, the authority of which is based on śabda (word). When Śrī Rāma lays down his life's principle as giving protection to those who ask for it, he quotes, as his authority, the words of Kanduva muni; and not content with it, proceeds to narrate the Kapōta episode to show that established practice is a greater authority for his principle. Again, Śrī Kṛṣṇa himself impresses on Arjuna the same truth in the Gīta: “*Yadyadācharati śrēṣṭhaḥ tattadēvētarō janaḥ sa yat pramāṇam kurutē lokastadanuvartatē*. Whatever the great man does, that, the world also tries to do; whatever authority he accepts, that, the world also accepts. In whatever manner he does a thing, in that very manner the world follows suit.” So the gōpikas tell him that their authority for performing this rite is established practice. They observe:

“We are not conversant with the Vēdic scriptural rituals, in which some animals are sacrificed. We live by tending cattle. Our ancestors have told us that you are the Supreme God; and the appellation ‘Nārāyaṇa’ by which the Supreme is called is applicable to you. Putting faith in their deeds and words, and ourselves believing that Nārāyaṇa alone can give us the instrument ‘Paṇai,’ we have come to you (‘*Nārāyaṇanē namakkē paṇai taruvān*). What the Vedas prescribe as compulsory duties are only the practices of those whose devotion to you is steady and strong. The Vēdic injunctions are implemented in accordance with the dignified will and steady intentions of your devotees: *Vidhāyaścha vaidikāḥ tvadiya gambhīra manōnusāriṇaḥ*. Śrī Yāmunāchārya has said that whatever the devotees approve of and adopt becomes the authority; whatever they disapprove and reject loses its authority. While all the mantras (incantations) are equal in sanctity and efficacy, we are to receive only that one which our ancestors have accepted. The rationale behind this is the sanction of established practice. The rest are to be avoided, even because they are not thus backed up. *Dwayamantra* is considered a gem among mantras and accepted as such in Śrī Vaiṣṇava tradition, even because the ancients have accepted and adopted it for their spiritual effort. Thus the gōpikas elucidate to Kṛṣṇa how their Mārgaśīrṣa Vrata has the sanction of established practice; and how established practice is deemed to be the highest of all authorities.

5. *Vēṇḍu vana kēṭṭiyēl:*

“Should you be pleased to hear, we shall make out a list of our requirements.”

Even when *prapannas* undertake to perform rites for the benefit of the world, they will have to do them in the same way as those who do them for their own selfish ends. So the gōpikas submit to Kṛṣṇa the list of requisites for the ritual. He is so happy that they, whom he should have gone to see, have themselves come to him. While the gōpikas are making their submissions, Kṛṣṇa loses himself, absorbed in contemplating their beauty—the beauty of their eyes, of their breasts and of their waists. Noticing Kṛṣṇa’s self-absorption, they say that they will submit the list of required materials, only if he deigns to hear them. Kṛṣṇa’s mind is riveted only on their charming features; and their words fail

to find their way to him. Observing this, they get piqued and say: "So long have we been away from you and you from us; we are both famished like those engaged in fasting; we could not enjoy you, nor you us. Today we have met; and we should together enjoy one another's company. We are still fasting and not yet taken the first morsel of food. But you have already gone half-way through your feasting. How unfair! We have yet to hear your words; we have yet to see your beautiful form in full; we have yet to enjoy your presence to our satisfaction. While this is our sad plight, how unjust that you see us, hear our words; and in your enjoyment of our presence forget everything else! Collect your senses and listen to what we say."

Thus, they explain that this rite of Mārga Śirṣa Bath is not exclusive to those who have desires to fulfil, that it can be undertaken for public benefit by those who have surrendered themselves to Him; that even they should not renounce the rites as such, but render them as consecrated services to God. They should give up all attachment to the deeds and their fruits and renounce the idea that they are doing them. The gōpikas are performing the rite in this spirit; and they approach Kṛṣṇa to request that he will supply the materials required for it. These materials are such that they can be used both for the external ritual performed for public benefit and for the internal spiritual effort that brings about union with Kṛṣṇa.

6. *Nālattai yellām naḍuṅga muralvana pālanna vaṇṇattu un pāñcacciyaṁē pōlvana śaṅgaṅga!*

"We want conchs resembling your Pāñchajanya, white as milk in colour and capable of producing a sound that makes the earth quake."

They want conchs for their rite; and the conchs should possess three qualities. Their sound should make the whole earth quake; they should be as white as milk in colour, they should resemble Pāñchajanya.

Sa ghṛ̥ṣṇo Dhārtarāṣṭrāṇām hṛdayāni vyadārayat

The sound of Kṛṣṇa's conch has severely shaken the hearts of people like Duryōdhana. But the conchs they require for their

ritual should make the entire earth tremble. There, Arjuna's enemies alone have trembled with fear. Here, all those who cannot tolerate the gōpikas, union with Kṛṣṇa should tremble. As they are performing the rite to ensure rainfall, they expect that the clouds will roar like Pāñchajanya, when they shower rain. The sound of the conch is considered auspicious; and so the conch is sounded before any work is actually undertaken or begun. Kṛṣṇa is like sapphire in colour; the conch that he holds is white like milk; and its whiteness heightens the beauty and attractiveness of his dark hue. They rejoice at the Lord's form and colour; likewise they find joy in the colour of his conch. To the devotees, the forms of all those that are closely associated with the Lord give as much joy as the form of God Himself. Then, again, the conchs to be given to them should resemble the Pāñchajanya in Kṛṣṇa's hand. A conch gives a louder sound if it has more hollow space within it. So they want conchs with extensive hollow space within, so that, when blown, they will give a louder boom. ŚrīKṛṣṇa's conch has acquired a great name. It has severely shaken the hearts of the enemies in the war at Kurukṣētra. The same conch has filled the heart of Rukmiṇi with joy at the time of her proposed wedding with Śiṣupāla. Kṛṣṇa's conch has averted the catastrophe and given the signal to Rukmiṇi where to meet him. The gōpikas want conchs that resemble Kṛṣṇa's conch, so that they will be helpful to them in reaching him. They know that there is no conch in the world that resembles Kṛṣṇa's; and so they expect he will come along bringing his unique conch to them. Again, the gōpikas are extremely fond of his conch; in fact, they are envious of its fortune, as it never leaves the hand of Kṛṣṇa, and as it has tasted Kṛṣṇa's lips. It has for its nourishment the exhaled breath of Kṛṣṇa. The gōpikas long for such life—a life in which they never leave hold of Kṛṣṇa's hand, they taste his nether-lip, and they draw sustenance from his words. They have asked, initially, for the conchs. Spiritually interpreted, the objective of the gōpikas is the attainment of the Lord; that is the immersion they aim at. To get at it, the primary requirement is *ananyārha śēṣatva jñāna*, the knowledge that they belong to Him and to none else. Ōmkāra or Praṇava gives this knowledge. And this Praṇava is the conch. 'Ōm' comprising of 'A,U,M', means "the self belongs only to the Supreme Self." This meaning is the sound of the conch. It is made clear that the self belongs to God only; he does not belong to himself; he does not belong to others either. So he is

not independent, nor does he depend upon others. He depends only on God. All his activities are assigned to him by God; and he performs them under His direction and control. So the fruits that result from them belong to God only. The nature of the self, therefore, is to belong to Him and to be of use to Him. What is of use to Him and is instinct with a sense of belonging to Him is called *Śēṣam*. Unless this 'sense of belonging' is acquired and cultivated sedulously, attainment of God is not possible. That is why the *gōpikas* have asked for conchs, first and foremost. They want *Praṇava* and meditation on its meaning. The whole earth should quake with the sound of the conch. By this 'earth' they mean 'Primeval Nature' (*Prakṛti*) and the shapes it assumes as bodies. Association with Primeval Nature is a bond which prevents the self from reaching the Supreme. Once this sense of belonging to God has dawned, the bond with Primeval Nature snaps. That is conveyed by 'the quake' of the earth. *Praṇava* thus brings about the illumination in the self, establishing how he belongs to God; this sense of belonging, in its turn, sunders the bond with Primeval Nature. The *gōpikas* long for this state of freedom from *Prakṛti*.

The conch should be white as milk. They desire that *Praṇava* should not propound *Nirguṇa Brahma*, Supreme Being without attributes. Milk stands for the attributes of God. Because the conch (*praṇava*) propounds those attributes, it is white. The secret that all *Upaniṣads* expound is the relationship between the self and the Supreme Self. These *Upaniṣads* are the cows. The milk that they yield comprises God's nature, form, attributes and magnificence as enunciated by the *Vēdas*. *Praṇava* proposes all of them. *Akāra* is the Cause of all words. The Supreme that *Akāra* signifies is the Cause of the whole universe. "A" comes from the verb 'Ava', which means 'protect' 'A' therefore means 'Protector' or Saviour. From this, it is clear that the self belongs only to the Supreme who is the Cause and Protector of the whole world.

Then the *gōpikas* say that the conchs should resemble *Pāñchajanya*. *Pāñchajanya* belongs only to *Śrīmannārāyaṇa* and to none else. Similarly, the self belongs to the Supreme Self and to none else. The conch is held in hand, is nourished and filled with breath by the Supreme. The *gōpikas* desire that the Supreme

should, likewise, become support, nourishment, and vital breath for them as well. The conch gives forth sound because of the vital breath blown into it by God; and that sound brings joy to those who are closely connected with Him; and inspires fear in the enemies of God's devotees. The gōpikas wish that they may, like the conch, do service to Kṛṣṇa by becoming useful, in some measure, to those who have established links with him. Thus they have initially implored him to give them the conch of Praṇava (Ōmkāra), which breathes on them the boom of knowledge that they belong to him and to none else.

7. *Pōyppāḍuḍai yanavē śālapperum paṛai yē:*

"We want large-sized instruments used for drumming." If there is larger vacant space within the instruments, the sound that comes out will be ampler. These are the instruments used by the Yādava community in their social gatherings of festivity. The gōpikas want them for this ritual as well. To wish that these instruments should be larger in size and ampler in the hollow space within them is to ask for a full knowledge of the meaning of "Namaḥ". What stands as an obstacle to the knowledge that one belongs to God is the thought that one is independent. The sense of belonging to God does not become steadily abiding, unless one becomes constantly aware that one is entirely dependent on God. The 'paṛai,' the drumming instrument, stands for the meaning of the word 'namaḥ.' 'Namaḥ' means "not mine." "I am not independent. The fruit of my activities does not belong to me. I know that God has been getting these things done by me for His own purpose." The 'paṛai,' the drumming instrument, is suspended from the neck and supported on the chest. It is an instrument that needs support. Like the word "namaḥ" in the mantra, it rests in the middle (here on the chest). Just as there is ample hollow space within the instrument, the word 'Namaḥ' gives an ample meaning, from its central position in the mantra. Joining with the word 'Om' which precedes it, it gives one meaning; joining with "Nārāyaṇa" which succeeds it, it gives a different meaning. Thus, it resembles a drumming instrument that yields a loud and extensive sound. We learn from this word 'Namaḥ,' the nature of the self, his progress and his destination. By imparting to the self a knowledge of his dependence, 'namaḥ' makes the

self know that he belongs neither to himself nor to others, but to God only. Thus the self acquires a sure and definite knowledge of himself. He cannot save himself; God alone must protect him. Thus he knows that the means to attain Him is Himself. Whatever the self does, he does without feeling that he has done it or that he is enjoying it. He does it because God is getting it done by him as His service; and it is enjoyed by God alone. He feels that God is getting the work done by him, who is His own instrument, and for His own pleasure. He should not think that it is for his own pleasure that he is rendering service to God. Thus the meaning of "namaḥ" (not mine) eliminates the enemy which is the feeling of independence, and consolidates knowledge of the self, knowledge of the means and knowledge of the nature of the resulting fulfilment. Hence this word "namaḥ" is deemed to be full of significance in the great *Tiru mantra*. The gōpikas wish to have knowledge of the full meaning of the term "Namaḥ."

8. *Pallāṇḍu iṣaippārē*

"We want devotees to sing the benediction."

While the gōpikas go in procession, blowing the conchs and drumming the instruments, there should be devotees to sing benediction to obviate the malefic influence of the evil eye. They want to be associated with devotees who, out of their intense love for God and godly persons, feel apprehensive about their welfare and invoke protection on them. They seem to be more intent on securing the fellowship of devout saints than even the attainment of God. It is clear that the coveted fellowship with devout saints, who are ever engaged in pronouncing benediction, leads to the attainment of God. The gōpikas have thus far asked for an 'abiding sense of belonging' to Him and for lasting 'awareness of dependence' upon Him and for perpetual eagerness for association with saints and devotees.

9. *Kolaviḷakkē*:

"We want the auspicious wick-stand with wicks lit."

We want the lit wick-stand so that the devout saints who are engaged in singing the benediction and who go before us in our procession may be able to see us in its light.

We must learn that 'the conviction that we belong to the devout saints' is more important than 'our sense of belonging to God.' The burning wick that enables us to see the saints and the saints to see us, does itself represent the knowledge that we belong to the saints. We do not follow the saints unless we have this strong belief that we belong to them only; and that they are the owners and are their possessions. This conviction helps us, like the burning wick, to walk in their footsteps. Śrī Bhattar remarks that the Divine Mother is the auspicious ray of light in the abode of Śrī Ranganātha: *Śrī Ranga harmyatala mungaḷa diparēkhām*. We pray that Lakṣmī will mediate. The Lord will not favour us unless we secure Lakṣmī's goodwill and intercession. Moreover, our objective is to attain Nārāyaṇa coupled with Lakṣmī. All our services, rendered with 'our sense of belonging' are meant, for and applicable to both of them. Enlighten us with the knowledge that we should seek the goodwill and intercession of Lakṣmī, as the only effective means of reaching Him. Light shows the way to those groping in darkness; it shows clearly what exists there. While we are in two minds about the means to be adopted to become free from bondage to birth-and-death and to reach the Supreme, one kind look from the Divine Mother reveals, as in a flash, that the Lord alone is the means. That is why she is considered as a ray, radiating from the auspicious burning-wick.

10. *Koṭiyē! Vīṭānamē!*

"We want the flag staff and the awning."

The gōpikas want a flagstaff to be carried in the procession so that they may be visible not only to those who are near but to those who are far away. They want the awning so that it will protect them from the falling dew. They have asked for these six articles as the requisites for their ritual—conchs, 'paṇai,' (percussion instruments for drumming), devotees to sing benediction, auspicious wick-stand, flagstaff and awning. The flagstaff, which is carried in front, gives an idea of the nature of the following procession. It indicates that the people in the procession are devotees who know that they belong to God. It needs no specific mention that we are connected with those to whom the fruits of our endeavours go. Similarly, those who consecrate all their

activities to God as services to Him will be deemed to be possessing the knowledge that they belong to Him. So their flag staff represents 'consecrated service.' What the gōpikas want is an abiding sense of consecrated service. *Dāsaḥ sakhā vāhana māsanam dhvajah yestē vitānam vyajanam trayimayaḥ*. Garuḍa, the embodiment of the three Vēdas, is both the flag staff and the awning to Śrīmannārāyaṇa. The gōpikas request Kṛṣṇa to give them Garuḍa. Garuḍa is Śabda, the "word" that bears God. So what they want to possess is *pūrvāchārya divyasūkti parampara*, a collection of traditional aphorisms and divine sayings, elucidating the nature and attributes of God. The awning prevents dew-drops from falling on us. We want some protection from the sense of enjoyment encroaching on us. If we think that our consecrated services will give us delight, our thinking causes damage to our very nature. As we go in a procession, after fully decorating ourselves, we hold an awning above us; otherwise, our beauty will get marred by drops of dew or flakes of snow falling from above. Here we are marching in a procession with a keen sense of belonging to Him and a deep knowledge of dependence on him (*jēsatva* and *pāratantrya*) as ornaments adorning our souls; and if the dew-drop of sense of enjoyment (*Bhōkṛtvā buddhi*) should fall on consecrated service (*Bhagavat kainkarya*), the entire nature of our souls gets tarnished. So an awning is needed to protect us from this sense of enjoyment. In this ritual of Mārgaśīrṣa Bath, the gōpikas seek the following to attain God: (1) knowledge that they belong to Him and to none else; (2) knowledge that they are entirely dependent on Him; (3) Fellowship with devout saints; (4) Sense of belonging to devout saints (5) Activities rendered as consecrated service; (6) Elimination of the sense of enjoyment from consecrated service. Kṛṣṇa tells them that the list is formidable; and he is not sure how many of them can be secured. Then the gōpikas make this final appeal.

11. *Alinilayāy aruḷ ēlōrempāvāy:*

"You who have lain on a fig-leaf, be merciful to us."

"Could there be anything that you cannot achieve, that you cannot secure! Could anything be impossible for One who, withdrawing all the worlds into his little stomach, has lain on a small, tender fig-leaf? If lying on a banyan leaf is possible for you, it cannot be impossible for you to secure for us these requisites

for the ritual. All that is needed is your mercy. If that is available, it can create anything. It has the power to make the impossible possible. You are now in the form of Kṛṣṇa, a form easily accessible to us. But we know that you are the same as the One who during the Deluge preceding the creation has lain on a fig-leaf, as the One who is the Cause of the entire universe. "Show us mercy." Two characteristics of Kṛṣṇa, his easy accessibility and his omnipotence are indicated, the former in the gōpikas' addressing him as *Mālē maṇivaṇṇā* and the latter in their addressing him as *āli nilaiyāy*. That he has these two qualities, Kṛṣṇa himself has declared in the last stanza of the Bhagavadgīta. *Sarvadharmān parityajya māmēkam śaraṇamvraja aham tvā sarvapapēbhyō mōkṣa iṣyami māśuchaḥ*. He has indicated his easy accessibility in the word *mām* and his omnipotence in *aham* in that Śloka. The gōpikas appeal to him: "You, who are omnipotent, have become Śrīkṛṣṇa for our sake so as to be easily accessible to us. Be merciful! Pray, give us all the materials required for our ritual."



PĀŚURAM XXVII

PREFACE.

The gōpikas make out a list of all the materials required for the ritual they have undertaken. Though the articles they want are easy to get, it is difficult to get the articles which have the qualities they prescribe for them. So Kṛṣṇa concludes that their hearts' wish is not to have the articles but to have him only. "*Vāsudēvaḥ sarvam iti sumahātmā sudurlabhaḥ*; it is difficult to get at a high-souled person who regards Vāsudēva alone as All-in-all." The gōpikas have the firm conviction that Vāsudeva alone is All-in-all. If there could be any one resembling Śrīkṛṣṇa, there might be a conch resembling Pāñchajanya. But as the former is impossible, the latter cannot be. That conch (Pāñchajanya) does not leave Kṛṣṇa even for a moment. So what the gōpikas wish is that Kṛṣṇa should ever be with them, holding Pāñchajanya in his hand. It is Śrīmannārāyaṇa Himself that has actually come down to the city of Mathura to become Vāsudēva. It is the form of that Vāsudēva that is worshipped as an idol in the temple. The gōpikas use the plural, 'conchs,' in their list of requirements. Śrīmannārāyaṇa's Pāñchajanya is one of them. Śrī Kṛṣṇa holds a conch which he blows in order to turn the herds of cattle towards him, when they go astray. This is the second conch. There is a third one, too, which is used in temples to summon people that it is time for worship. Lord Kṛṣṇa offers these three conchs to the gōpikas. The devotees' 'sense of belonging' is not confined only to the Supreme Phenomenon of Śrīmannārāyaṇa; it extends to Śrī Kṛṣṇa who is the same phenomenon in a glorious form (*vibhavarūpa*) accessible to them; it extends still further to the Adorable Idol (*archārūpa*) in the temple. This is the significance of the demand for 'conchs' by the gōpikas and their grant by Kṛṣṇa.

The demand for a large-sized percussion-instrument (*paṇai*) is met by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in a similar way. There is one such instrument used by Jāmbavān to proclaim the victory of Trivikrama. There is another, larger than the previous one, which is played upon, during Rāma's incarnation, to proclaim the victory of Śrī Rāma

over Rāvaṇa. There is a third, which Kṛṣṇa uses when he is engaged in Kumbha dance; and this is larger than either of the instruments previously cited. Kṛṣṇa offers all these three percussion instruments to them. '*Paṛai*' stands for the knowledge that the self is entirely dependent on Him. To inculcate it, the misconception that the self is independent should first be eliminated. The three incarnations in which the self's independence is crushed and his dependence on God is established are those of Trivikrama, Śrī Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa; and on these three incarnations, the gōpikas have already sung their benediction. Bali, Rāvaṇa and Kamsa respectively represent arrogant egoism and independence, which meet with a crushing blow in these incarnations. As Trivikrama, He has shown his divinity in subjugating Bali's patronising egoism. As Śrī Rāma, He has shown prowess as man, without any trace of divinity, in crushing Rāvaṇa's arrogant egoism. As Śrī Kṛṣṇa, He has gone down to the lowliest state among men, that of the humble and ignorant Yādavas, and by his easy accessibility and bewitching beauty overcome the subtle pride of the heart. That is the significance of saying that the first instrument is a 'small *paṛai*,' the second 'a large *paṛai*' and the third 'a larger *paṛai*.'

The gōpikas have asked for a band of devotees to sing the benediction. They are confident that wherever devotees sing benediction, there God is with them. Kṛṣṇa therefore suggests to them to enlist the cooperation of saints celebrated for singing benediction, Perī Ālwār (Viṣṇuchitta) Nammālwār (Śaṭhaḡōpa) and the like. Kṛṣṇa has agreed that his consort, Śrī Mahālakṣmī will be with them as the auspicious wick-light to guide them. He has consented to give Garuḍa as their flagstaff; he has graciously agreed to send Ananta to be used as awning. On the night when Kṛṣṇa was born at Mathura and brought to Vrēpalle, Ananta turned up and spread his hoods as umbrella to protect the child from rain. Ananta is a high-souled devotee who has turned his body into different forms and shapes so as to be of use to the Lord in every situation. He has, in turn, become bed, seat, garment, sandals, pillow, umbrella, awning etc., and by his consecrated services come to be known as Śēṣa (or 'one belonging to the Lord'). As the gōpikas also aspire to become the Lord's possessions, he has given them 'Śēṣa' to serve as awning. Then Kṛṣṇa enquires: "Now that you have all the requisites for the ritual, let me know

the fruit you expect to derive from the rite." The gōpikas elucidate in this Pāsuram what they expect to receive as a result of their performance of this ritual. They outline the obvious results that accrue to the general benefit of all; and mention suggestively, the particular benefits that spiritual aspirants receive.

*Kūḍārai vellum śir Gōvindā! undannai
ppādippārai koṇḍu, yām peru sammānam
nāḍupugalum pariśināl nanrāga
śśūdagamē, tōḷvaḷaiyē, tōḍē, sevippūvē,
pādagamē, yeṇṇanaiya palkalanum yāmaṇivōm
āḍai yuḍuppōm; adanpinne pālśōru
mūdaney peydu muḷaṅgaivaḷivāra
kkūḍiyirundu kuḷirndēlōrempāvāy*

Summary.

"O Gōvindā! with the plenitude of your auspicious qualities, you overcome the enemies who are averse to be with you. The great honour that we expect to receive, after glorifying you and securing the percussion instrument 'paṇai,' will be of the order of universal acclaim. We have to put on many ornaments: bangles on the forearms, armlets for the upper arms; studs for the lower lobes, and rings mounted with flowers for the upper lobes, of ears; and anklets for the ankles. Then we should wear beautiful sarees. Afterwards, we will sit with you happily; and we shall together enjoy the feast of the sweet pudding of cooked rice mixed with milk, ghee and sugar. Our relish for this particular dish (pāyasam) is such that, as we eat, the fluid trickles down our forearms to the elbows." This is the benefit that the rite is expected to yield.

Commentary.

1. *Kūḍārai vellumśir gōvindā*

"Gōvindā, your qualities overcome those who are averse to you."

The gōpikas elucidate the benefits that flow from completing the ritual after securing the percussion-instrument, 'paṇai,' which is an essential requisite for this rite. The requisites have already been mentioned in the previous Pāsuram.

The benefit to be derived from this rite is getting united with God, and enjoying his divinely attractive person and auspicious and exhilarating attributes. To signify this, they prepare a pudding with cooked rice, milk, sugar and ghee. As this delicacy is prepared on the 27th day, corresponding to the recital of this Pāsuram, it has been called 'Kūḍārai.' This Pāsuram is considered important because in it is stated that Kṛṣṇa and the gōpikas have together enjoyed a sweet pudding.

In this and the two succeeding Pāsurams, the gōpikas glorify Gōvinda. So far, they have sung about 'Nārāyaṇa,' 'Kēśava' etc., and not about 'Gōvinda.' In the next Pāsuram, they explain the reasons for mentioning the name of Gōvinda; and in the pāsuram that succeeds it, they declare that the benefits they have so far mentioned are not real benefits; and they elucidate clearly the end they have elected to attain.

They say that Kṛṣṇa has qualities which overcome those who are averse to him. There are three classes among people: those who are favourably inclined, those who are clearly hostile, and those who are quite indifferent. Some turn to God, some others turn away from God; and the rest are unconcerned with the subject of God—they are just indifferent. Still, all these may turn away from God sometimes. The peculiarity here is that there is no hard and fast rule that enemies alone turn away from God; even friends sometimes turn away. Seeing the great excellences of God, some devout people think that, vile sinners as they are, they will only be causing contamination to Him by their approach. So they keep aloof from Him, although they too eagerly long for union with Him. A painful consciousness of their own unworthiness keeps them aloof from Him. The Ājwārs have turned away from Him, taking into account His great excellences and their own lapses, and how therefore they stand poles apart. Śrī Yāmunāchārya wished for the company of God; but then considering how such a wish was improper for a cruel, shameless and impious and impure man like him to entertain, he gave it up and kept himself aloof. God exerts to draw such saints under His influence by showing them His easy accessibility and the entrancing beauty of His person; and by impressing them that on their touch depends His sustenance and on their company His existence. The gōpikas, who are lovers, sometimes keep aloof out of pertness

caused by imagined hurt. The Ālwārs who pass through the stage of the beloved (Nāyikāvastha) present their reticent attitude which extends sometimes to sauciness, by telling Kṛṣṇa not to approach them and not to speak to them: and they insist upon his giving back their ball to them and peremptorily order him to leave. But Kṛṣṇa wins their favour by humbling himself before them even to touching their feet, and by his sweet and gentle words of pacification and comfort, and by his pleas and excuses for the past remissness and assurances for future good behaviour. Those who turn away from him because of their spite and envy, he subjugates with his mighty valour; and brings them under control. There are those who are neither hostile nor friendly; they are simply indifferent. These also come under the category of those whose attitude is unfavourable to him. He pursues them, unseen, gives them protection through those whom they trust; and finally wins them over by his beauty and other qualities. Thus we find four categories of people who keep themselves aloof from God: 1. Great saints who shudder approach because of consciousness of their own unworthiness. 2. Intense lovers who saucily forbid His approach because of imagined hurt. 3. People who are neither friendly nor hostile but keep away out of sheer indifference and unconcern. 4. Determined enemies who flout Him because of their spite and envy. And all these are overcome by God by the exercise of His qualities. So the gōpikas address Kṛṣṇa as the "One who overcomes by his qualities those who keep away from him."

The previous Pāsuram has shown us how, in response to Kṛṣṇa's enquiry as to what they want from him for their rite, the gōpikas have obtained Śrīkṛṣṇa, his consort Mahālakṣmī, Ananta, Garuḍa, the Ālwārs and the conch, and made them their own. Kṛṣṇa questions them: "Is it fair that you should exploit my accessibility and overcome me by expropriating all my possessions as your own? Well, let us see, I shall defeat you all!" The gōpikas then remind him: "Lord! It is your nature to defeat those who keep aloof from you. But you yield yourself to those who are eager to be with you." This is the truth. He overcomes only those who deliberately keep away from Him. He eagerly waits till the last moment whether they change their minds and come, wishing to be with him. Rāvaṇa, who has overcome Indra and other celestials, thinks in his pride that this man Rāma counts

for nothing. So he makes up his mind to fight. Śrī Rāma makes several attempts to see whether Rāvaṇa will change his mind and come to join him. He sends Hanumān and later Angada to negotiate reapproachment; when war is forced upon him, he fights and eliminates the enemies one by one. When Rāvaṇa himself stands helpless on the battle-field, Rāma chivalrously permits him to go home and rest and return to fight the next day armed afresh. If, even at that stage, Rāvaṇa has not gone back to the city to rearm himself but shown readiness to negotiate peace, Rāma, instead of defeating him, will have yielded to him. It is to the world's good fortune that such a thought has not struck Rāvaṇa. He goes back into the city, comes next day for the fight, fresh and rearmed, only to be defeated and killed. The Supreme Lord overcomes only those who refuse to surrender to Him. Rāvaṇa refuses to get reconciled to Rāma; and so Rāma kills him. When Vibhīṣana goes to Rāma and tells him that life for him consists in being with him, Rāma receives him warmly. Without any hesitation that he is of the enemy-camp Rāma offers him protection. Rāma fights for Vibhīṣana and gives him the crown of Lanka. Kṛṣṇa defeats Duryōdhana who refuses to be with the Pāṇḍavas and cares little for Kṛṣṇa; but Kṛṣṇa makes himself available to the Pāṇḍavas, who abide ever with him, for such lowly duties as of a messenger and a charioteer. It is true that those who are with God and those who are away from Him are alike under His control. He overcomes enemies by His valour, brings them under control by aiming His arrows at them. But He shows His excellence and goodness, easy accessibility and bewitching beauty and thus draws close to Himself those who wish to be with Him. Apparently, it looks that He subjugates His enemies but surrenders to His devotees.

But enemies of God enjoy greater ease and happiness than His devotees. The wounds caused by God's arrows are only skin-deep; they can be healed with medicine. God's loving consideration, excelling graciousness and facile accessibility become a perennial source of anxiety to the devotees that they may bring Him into some danger. Thus on the devotees, the effect of God's qualities is not an externally visible wound but an internally disturbing agony, for which there is no cure. There are people who know their true nature and God's nature too; and even so, their feeling of their unworthiness comes in the way of their joining

Him. So they keep themselves aloof; but God wins them over by his excelling graciousness and goodness. The gōpikas have a natural feminine feeling of modesty and reserve, which makes them believe that Kṛṣṇa should himself come and claim them as his own; and that they should not go out to him. This feeling is undermined by the graciousness, beauty, goodness and other excellences of Kṛṣṇa; and Kṛṣṇa makes a conquest of the gōpikas with as much ease as he defeats his enemies with his valour. There are those who think that the self is independent; and that the self and the body are one and the same, and who, in their egoism, defy the Supreme. Even here, the Supreme smashes their egoism and makes them fall at His feet, only by the display of His qualities. Those who are absolutely ignorant become ripe in wisdom under the influence of His qualities. Those who are wise develop infatuation for Him under their spell. Our ignorance melts by constantly listening to the praise of His qualities; and we come to know of our true nature. The Ālwārs who are both sages and saints, full of knowledge, wisdom and devotion, fall under a spell of deep fondness for Kṛṣṇa when they see the Lord submitting, in his extremely gracious way, to his mother, Yaśōda, to be bound to a wooden mortar.

The gōpikas observe: "Such is the glory of your attributes, O Gōvinda! You are so gracious as to receive and ever keep company with cattle which have neither an aspiration to join you nor a tenacity in rejecting you, nor a sense of gratitude for the protection you give them of your own accord. How then can you refuse to take us into your company? You have exploded our feeling of feminine reserve and taken us into your fold, O Gōvinda!" It is said that Kṛṣṇa takes special care of the cows, because they provide a cover for his philanderings with the gōpikas. When he is taken to task by his parents for returning home late, he readily makes the cows the scapegoats for the delay, while the real cause lies elsewhere with the gōpikas. Kṛṣṇa displays close attachment to the cows, although they have no aspiration to be with him; and this gesture he makes because of his intense love for the gōpikas. So the gōpikas call him 'Gōvinda.'

The āchāryas create opportunities to God to meet us; and so He is very considerate to them. In the same way as the cows provide the occasion for the meeting of Kṛṣṇa with the gōpikas,

the āchāryas are instrumental in bringing about the meeting of the Supreme Self with the individual selves. The consideration that a lover shows to the procurer of the desired beloved is greater than the love that he shows his beloved; because it is the procurer's competence that turns his beloved's attitude of reluctance to him into one of acceptance of him. The preceptors turn even those who are averse to God into those who long for Him.

With a view to giving salvation to sentient beings who, in all their intents and purposes, are no better than insentient things, the Lord has equipped their bodies with intellect, mind, senses and other implements; and given them Vēdas and other scriptures to guide them in their conduct of life. Despite this, they remain adamant and refuse to join Him out of sheer hate, malice and spite. The Lord makes innumerable efforts to draw them to Himself; and when all attempts fail, He subjugates them by valour. There are some who know their own nature and who are filled with devotion for Him. But that very knowledge and that very devotion come in the way of their joining Him. They feel that they are unworthy of going near Him; and so they keep aloof. But He exercises his ingratiating goodness and draws them to Himself. Some other people forget their own nature and His nature in the intoxication of their all-excelling love, and fall under the spell of His attributes of beauty, delicacy and accessibility. God shows them His true nature, form, attributes and grandeur and supremacy and inspires them with courage and knowledge that go beyond their love, and thus bring them under His influence. He attracts people like the gōpikas with His beauty and personal magnetism. He brings under His control people who are indifferent to Him by bringing about contacts for them with preceptors like the Āḷwārs. Thus He does not leave out any one of those who, under the shroud of ignorance that Primeval Nature casts on them, are even slightly ill-disposed towards Him. He will take every one to Himself and leaves out none.

2. *Undannaippāḍipparaikoṇḍu*

"Glorifying your name and obtaining 'parai', the percussion-instrument, from you."

Prior to the launching of the Mārgaśīrṣa Vrata, Vrēpalle was like the city of Hiraṇyakaśapa, where people were forbidden

to sing the name of God. They were to say only *Hiraṇyāyanamaḥ*. Likewise, the gōpikas were forbidden by their elders to sing the name of Kṛṣṇa. Now they feel free and make amends for their previous omission by glorifying Kṛṣṇa in his very presence and derive comfort from it. They are not the people who expect to receive any benefit by singing about God. They sing, because thereby they find a justification for having throats. Instead of saying "glorifying you," they say "glorifying what is yours"; thereby suggesting that in singing his names, they are doing something which he ought to be doing for them. "You should have come to us and glorified us. Instead, unable to endure separation from you, we have hastened to you singing your name." When they hear the sweet melody of his flute, they hasten to his presence, blissfully unaware of what they are doing; and then they cannot refrain from singing his name, 'Gōvinda.'

Thus singing, the gōpikas manage to obtain the *paṛai* from him. What they wish to accomplish is mainly the chanting of his name and of his attributes. They have realised this principal objective; and made it a means to plead for the percussion-instrument, *paṛai* which is needed for the ritual by which the people are to benefit. Their principal objectives are perennial union with him and constant chanting of his name. Unable to abstain from chanting his name, they continue it adopting it as a means to get the *paṛai* so as to fulfil the desire of the public. The gōpikas say: "O Kṛṣṇa, you have to honour us: because in a place where the elders are opposed to our singing your name, we have managed to get their consent and are singing it publicly to our hearts, content. Instead of your coming to us and praising us to win our favour, we have come glorifying you. For this, you have to do us honour. While you sing our names clandestinely on your flute, we glorify your name "Gōvinda" publicly from house-tops. For this, you have to honour us.

3. *Yāṁ peṇu summānam*

"The honour we receive."

By using the word 'we,' they declare their uniqueness. "Nārāyaṇanē namakkē": They are the people who hold the firm conviction that Nārāyaṇa alone will certainly grant to them

only, the fulfilment of their aspirations. Even if, by glorifying Kṛṣṇa, they fulfil the wish of the public by obtaining the *paṭai*, they too must have some special benefit for themselves for their labours. So they plead for a special reception for themselves. By using the word *śammānam*, they suggest that they would like to have an honour similar to that which Sita is privileged to receive from Śrī Rāma. Sita accompanies Rāma upto the threshold, pronouncing benediction, when he goes with Sumantra in response to a call from his father, Daśaratha. There Rāma honours Sita (*Paṭi sammānitā Sita*) by placing around her neck the garland that he is wearing and requesting her, after touching her feet, not to proceed further but halt there. The *gōpikas* desire to receive a similar honour from Kṛṣṇa. While it is usual for the beloved to touch the feet of her lover, is it permissible for the lover to touch the feet of his beloved; and does it amount to doing her honour? Such a doubt need not arise. As one privileged to hold her husband's hand in holy wedlock, the wife considers touching his feet as duty. Prompted by love, the husband touches the feet of his wife as she is his beloved. The wife touches the feet of her man as a duty imposed; but the husband touches the feet of his wife out of love and attachment. He does not do this because it is sanctioned by scripture; he does it only to express his intense love for her; and so it is an honour for woman. The *gōpikas* wish to receive such honour from Kṛṣṇa.

4 *Nāḍu pugatūm pariśināl nanṛāga:*

“The honour that is shown to us should be such as to merit the acclaim of the world.”

“The way you honour us should cause surprise to the people; and they should extol us as exceptionally fortunate people to have received such great honour as will more than compensate for the grief we have experienced in separation from you.” How is it that the *gōpikas*, who have never aspired for fame or profit or reverence from any quarter, now seek honour that deserves acclaim from the world? It looks strange. But all that they aspire for is that, hearing of the universal chorus of praise for the honour they have received from Kṛṣṇa at their meeting, the friends of the devotees should feel exhilarated with bliss and their enemies should be shocked with fright. They feel that the salvation of others is

their gain. They believe that those who find happiness in listening to the soul-stirring experiences of devotees will also gain salvation. They further expect that hearing of their experiences will bring about a welcome change of heart in the enemies of devotees; and that their hostility will mitigate and make them more prone towards God. It is this aspiration for the salvation of all that is at the bottom of their plea for sammāna.

During a visit of Draupadī and Arjuna to Dwāraka, Kṛṣṇa and Satyabhāmā welcome them; and all the four engage themselves in pleasant conversation. The watch is ordered not to admit any one, while they are thus engaged. Kṛṣṇa lies on the couch with his head in Arjuna's lap and feet in Satyabhāmā's; and Draupadī sits near them. Just then Sanjaya arrives and asks to be admitted. The watch comes in to seek orders whether Sanjaya may be let in. Then Kṛṣṇa observes: "This Sanjaya is a great devotee. If he sees us as we are, he will be immensely pleased. Besides, unable to contain his happiness on seeing us thus, he will praise our intimacy before the malicious Kauravas. That will disturb their minds. There are two advantages in this. Let him in." As expected, Sanjaya is transported with joy at the sight of Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna and reports to the Kaurava court what he has seen: "How wonderful is the love that binds Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna! Arjuna is sure to win. You have no hope of survival in a war with him." The gōpikas demand from Kṛṣṇa an honour that invites similar public acclaim of their association with him.

Rāvana sends Śuka and Sārana as spies to scout and estimate Śrī Rāma's army and its strength. They are caught in their attempt; but are released under Rāma's orders and permitted to have a view of the army. On return to Rāvaṇa, they praise the strength and valour of the Vānara heroes in Rāma's army; and suggest that Rāvana might leave Lanka and go elsewhere. They tell him: "Rāma is not like the immortals who, in the lasting plenitude of their wealth and power, have conferred boons on you and now stand in constant fear of you. He is the Person who has bestowed dominions on those from whom you have received yours. He has already coronated your brother as the King of Lanka. The Vānaras feel blessed under his sheltering wing." All that the gōpikas desire is that the people in the world should be able to feel happy when they see those who revel in God's grace. They do not in the least aspire for fame for themselves in asking for this honour.

Again, they say that the reception should be a glorious one, full and perfect. It is not the world's acclaim that is important. The honour becomes full and perfect, only (1) when Kṛṣṇa does it of his own accord, feeling it as a privilege to decorate them with his garlands; (2) when he feels that for all the anguish of separation they have passed through, doing them honour is but a token of his concern; and (3) when he realises that it is their association that lends prime support to his existence; and that it is for his own sake that he is doing them this honour. To honour them because they have expressed a wish for it, is no honour at all; it becomes charity; it is tantamount to giving alms. Thus, it is for the fulfilment of his nature that Kṛṣṇa shall do this honour to them; and the gōpikas shall receive it for the sustenance of their nature. It is only then that the honour can be considered well done.

One more observation, while on this. Śrīkṛṣṇa should not himself do this honour. He should get Nīlādēvi to do it. Then only the honour comes to be regarded (*nanṛāga*) as "well done." The gōpikas recall to mind how Hanumān has been honoured at Śrī Rāma's coronation and desire to have a similar honour for themselves. Śrī Rāma gives the pearl-garland, presented to him by Indra, to Sita and tells her: "*Pradēhi Śubhagē, hāram yasya tuṣṭāsi bhāmini*: O Sita, give this to the one who has pleased you with his valour, prowess and wisdom." Sita bestows the garland on Hanumān, the son of Vāyu. The gōpikas wish that they may be similarly honoured; and that Kṛṣṇa may get Nīlādēvi to honour them. They give a list of the things to be given to them at that time:

5. *śūḍagamē*: Ornaments for the forearms, bangles;
6. *Tōḷ Vaḷaiyē*: Ornaments for the upper arms, armlets;
7. *roḍē*. Ornaments for the lower lobes of the ear, studs;
8. *sevippūvē*: Ornaments for the upper lobes of the ear—rings with flower-designs;
9. *pāḍāgamē*: Ornaments for the feet—anklets and trinkets for the feet,
10. *Enṇanaiya paḷ kalanum yām aṇivōm*:

"We wish to adorn ourselves with such and many other similar ornaments."

The relationship of the bride and the groom starts first with the joining of their hands, Pānigrahaṇa. The bride and the groom sit opposite to each other with a curtain separating them; and, at the wedding, the bride's hand is placed in the groom's. That marks the first contact; and by giving her hand to be held by him she comes to be regarded as belonging to him and to no other. So it is her *hand* which receives his first glance and feels his first touch. It is the hand that gives her the privilege of belonging to him only and to none else. So the gōpikas desire that the forearm should be adorned foremost of all. It is that decorated arm that the groom aspires to place on his bosom, shoulder and head. After the ceremonial holding of hands is over, the couple are now seated side by side, close to each other, and then they make oblations to the fire. Then they retire into privacy to share conjugal bliss. At this time the upper arm of the bride enjoys the touch of the groom's body. So the gōpikas wish to have their upper arms adorned next. The woman feels enraptured in her valiant husband's embrace, when the corns formed on his body by the pressure of the bow-string impinge on her. Similarly, the man feels happy if his wife embraces him with her hands adorned with bracelets and armlets. When these ornaments impinge on him, he feels an elation of mind and exults in joy. That is why the gōpikas desire ornaments, first for their forearms and next for their upper arms.

When the couple are locked up in a warm embrace as they lie in bed, when the woman's head rests on his shoulder, the ornaments of her ears leave their marks on his shoulder, thus beautifying it. So the gōpikas ask for ear-ornaments that will leave their marks to beautify his shoulders. Again, when lovers indulge in casual small talk in secret whispers, the man keeps his mouth close to the woman's ear; and therefore the ear should be adorned with ornaments. The studs (*tōḍē*) are worn on the lower lobes of the ears. On the upper lobes of the ears, women wear two ornaments, rings with flower-designs (*sevippūvē*). In ancient times, they used to wear real flowers on their ears. In our times women wear the ornamental flowers made of gold as symbolic substitutes for them. When the woman feels shy in his embrace, the man pretends to be smelling the flower in her ear and thus tries to lessen her coyness. The gōpikas want flowers for their ears which their lover takes delight in smelling.

Then comes the turn of the ornaments for the feet. When the couple develop such close intimacy, petty storms in tea-cups are round the corner. When such embarrassing situations arise, the lover has no alternative but to touch the feet of the beloved to win her back. The foot therefore needs an ornament. The gōpikas thus trace in detail the various stages of lovers' sport from the initial holding of hands to the final touching of feet; and demand ornaments to make themselves attractive to their lover at all stages.

They have clarified to Kṛṣṇa the procedure to be adopted by him in his union with them. "Lord, hold our hands in yours and make us your own; and then place our hands on your head and bosom, shoulders and feet with love and thus adorn them." Those who are separated from Him gradually slide into the ocean of bondage-to-birth (*Samsāra*) even because there is none to help them. They eagerly long for the hand of the saviour to pull them out. The curtain that separates the bride and the groom in a wedding is the symbol of the veil of ignorance that separates the Lord and the individual self. It is the father who takes the hand of the bride from one side of the curtain and places it in the hand of the groom on the other side; and the bride's father stands for the āchārya who brings about the contact of the self and the Supreme. Once the hand is firmly clasped, the curtain drops down. "Māmēva yē prapadyantē māyā mētām tarantitē: whoever seeks succour from me will find himself transported over illusion." The situation changes. From sitting opposite on the other side of the curtain, the bride moves to a position beside the groom on the same side of the curtain. So the first thing they want is the bracelet adorning the wrist. Those who surrender and wish to reach God through an āchārya go through the process of Pancha-samskāra (fivefold purification) and receive initiation into a mantra. The āchārya ties sacred bands (*Kankaṇam*) to their wrists so that they may acquire knowledge of their true nature. That sacred band is the ornamental bracelet. After the wristlet comes the armlet. After the joining of hands, the gōpikas long for the Lord's embrace. That embrace is their ornamental armlet. After the clasping of hands, the bride and the groom perform certain sacrificial oblations, sitting side by side on the same seat. While the man makes the offering, the bride is there as a partner in it.

Similarly, after taking refuge in Him, the individual self should, while carrying on his work, consider that God is getting it done through him as His instrument, and that he is not doing it as an independent being. Work is done by the arms; and when they do the work as instrument of God, the arms are sanctified; and such sanctity is their ornament. The person who has received initiation from an āchārya wears a band on the wrist tied by him. Later he is made to receive the impressions of the conch and the disc on his shoulders as marks of his association with God. Until he knows his relationship with God, mere chanting of the mantra received from the āchārya will not bring him fulfilment, will not make him realise his nature fully. So after receiving the sacred wrist-bands, they ask for the impressions of the disc and the conch as ornaments for their arms.

The gōpikas later ask for ornaments for the ears which hear the lord's secret whispers while in bed with him. The studs, ornaments of the lower ear-lobes help to trim the facial beauty, while the ornamental-flowers of the upper lobes help enhance the enjoyment of union. Later, they ask for anklets so that once the lover touches their feet, he cannot let go his hold on them. The suppliant gathers three secrets through the āchārya's instruction. The first is the *Tirumantra*. In the same way as the ear-stud lends a final touch to the handsome appearance of a woman, the *Tirumantra* imparts to an aspirant knowledge of the true nature and beauty of self. That a woman has her husband alive is indicated by her having ear-studs and bangles on the forearms. The knowledge that the self belongs to the Supreme and that the self cannot be claimed by others comes from the *Tirumantra*, which may, therefore, be regarded as the ear-stud. The ornamental flowers which adorn the upper lobes of ears are the symbols of enjoyment of union. Of the three secrets learnt from the āchārya, the second is *Dwaya mantra*. And this is the means which enables the self to be a fit object of God's enjoyment. It consists of two sentences in the same way as the ear-ornaments of the upper lobes consist of two ornamental flowers. The anklet is the final verse, *Charama śloka*. The self is taken to the Supreme when, leaving all other means, he holds on to the firm conviction that He alone will take him there. And this is total surrender. The feet have to be adorned with anklets because believing in God as the means to attaining

Him they have given up movement themselves. And this giving up of self-effort is the ornament to the feet.

It may also be said that the ear-stud stands for knowledge and the ornamental-flowers of the upper lobe for devotion and the anklet for renunciation. The ear-stud is the *Tirumantra* which teaches knowledge. It elucidates the true nature of the self. The self called 'm,' belongs only to the Supreme called 'A'; he does not belong to himself nor does he belong to others. This knowledge comes from understanding the meaning of *Tirumantra*. So *Tirumantra* stands for knowledge. The ornamental flowers of the upper lobes of the ear are the *Dwayamantra*. This mantra strengthens the will to consecrate all the activities-mental, verbal and physical—to Śrīmannārāyaṇa in love. This becomes possible, only when there is deep love for God. Hence the *Dwayamantra* indicates devotion. Then the anklet is the *Charama Śloka*. Giving up all other means is renunciation. The essence of this Śloka, when clearly understood, leads to accepting Him as the only means of attaining Him and giving up all other means as futile. This is the anklet of detachment or renunciation. Thus the *gōpikas*, aspiration for knowledge, devotion and renunciation are indicated in their demands for these ornaments for the ears and the feet.

There are several other ornaments also which they demand. There are innumerable spiritual qualities which add to the beauty of self; and they want them all. Such ornaments as they have mentioned above are not to be worn by them before they meet Kṛṣṇa. After meeting him, they tell him that they wish to have these ornaments. The Lord then agrees and himself decorates them with the ornaments they demand.

11. *Āḍai Yuḍuppōm*

"After decorating ourselves with ornaments, we shall wear the garments." Wearing the garments usually follows decoration with ornaments.

Gōvindā undannaippāḍi āḍaiyuḍuppōm:

"Gōvinda! We shall sing your glory and then put on the garments. You provided Draupadi with garments when she cried out your name 'Gōvindā' from a remote distance. When

we are before you and sing your name 'Gōvindā,' what room is there for any doubt of our getting them? We are sure to get them; we shall put them on. *Nanrāga āḍai yuḍuppōm*. "We shall dress ourselves well." Śrīkṛṣṇa will set right any flaws that may be found in the mode of their dress. Then alone can they be deemed to have dressed well. The whole world should admire them for the way they have dressed. After the agony of long separation, the gōpikas prepare for union with him; they put on their ornaments, dress themselves trim and then wish to sit with Kṛṣṇa to share a common meal.

A woman may put on any number of ornaments; but they cannot give her glamour. Only when she puts on her robes does she become beautiful. It is the garment that lends attractive beauty to woman. Similarly, how numerous be the spiritual qualities the self might possess, he has no beauty unless he masters the knowledge that he belongs wholly to God. In the same way as a garment spreads over the body and covers it, the sense of belonging to God overspreads the usual nature of self and deprives him of his independence. Then *Aham*, which is the usual nature of self, is veiled and the self is made to appear as *dāsōham*, as belonging to Him. Knowledge of self which appears independent is like the naked body. The same knowledge when divested of independence and imbued with the sense of belonging to Him transforms itself from indecent nudity into charming beauty. That is why the gōpikas demand this garment.

A person may possess many spiritual qualities and profound knowledge and erudition. But these are of no avail without right conduct. They are like ornaments; while right conduct is like garment. Only when the garment of right conduct is worn, all other ornaments of knowledge and spiritual qualities become resplendent. In the absence of righteous conduct, they become colourless and insipid. Garments are the external wrappings; the real covering is upright conduct only. Śrī Rāma clarifies that for woman right conduct alone is the cover. "*Vṛtta māvaraṇam striyāḥ*." The gōpikas thus ask for knowledge of the three secrets (as ornaments) and for right conduct (as garment); they wish that this knowledge should find expression in practice.

12. *Adan pinṇē pāl śṣṛu mūḍaney peydu muḷaṅgaivaḷi
vārakkūḍi yirundu kuḷirndu ēḷōrempāvāy*

“Afterwards, let us comfortably sit together and slowly eat the pudding made of cooked rice and milk and sugar and ghee, even as it trickles down our arms to the elbows.” So long during the period of the ritual they have given up milk and ghee. Now that they complete the rite after getting *paṛai* (percussion instrument) from Kṛṣṇa, they think of having this pudding for their meal, with Kṛṣṇa participating in it. Sita rejects all ornaments and food as unwanted things during the period of her separation from Rāma, but when she gets re-united with him, she puts on her ornaments and eats with him. The gōpikas aspire to do likewise. Rāma does not agree to have his matted locks cleansed and smoothened; he does not wish to take his bath until after Bharata has similar relief. Kṛṣṇa too should take his bath only after the gōpikas have it. As Kṛṣṇa and the gōpikas have stopped taking milk and ghee so long, and as these two are available in plenty in Vrēpalle, rice should now be cooked in milk, not in water; and ghee should be poured in such lavish measure that the cooked rice is submerged in it. Then they should all sit together touching each other and Kṛṣṇa and eat the pudding. They are not interested so much in eating as in sitting together to eat. The devotees are mainly interested in coming into contacts with other devotees and saints and not in mere eating. The strain undergone over such a long period in coming to Kṛṣṇa and the anguish of separation from him will disappear with his mere touch and with contact of other kindred spirits. Thus relieved, with minds cool and collected they sit comfortably to eat the sweet pudding with Kṛṣṇa. They have completed their ritual. They have reached the stage of enjoyment of fulfilled desire; and in this condition what they aspire for is consecrated service to God. Dedicated service imbued and blended with experience of God is their food; that is the rice cooked with milk. The fruit they expect from this service of God, which they do with all their devotion to Him, is to see His face brighten and beam with cheer. The happiness that such service naturally gives them is not at all the fruit they aim at. This lofty way of thinking is the ghee which submerges the rice cooked with milk, *i.e.*, dedicated service instinct with experience of God. The feeling of happiness in having done the services assigned to them by God, and the feeling of satisfaction of God in having

received those services from His devotees, are symbolised by their eating the sweet pudding together. What the gōpikas want is this sublime experience of shared bliss. “*Sōṣṇutē sarvān kāmān saha Brahmaṇā vipaśchitā*: God-experience (Brahmānubhava), consists in enjoying all the auspicious attributes of the Lord together with the All-knowing Lord.” “*Ahamannādaḥ, ahamannādaḥ*.” This Upaniṣadic saying shows that the food that is most enjoyable for the self is the Supreme Being (Para Brahma). “Milk” represents all the glorious and auspicious attributes of God. ‘Rice cooked in milk’ (*Pālṣoru*) symbolises the Supreme Phenomenon filled with all the glorious qualities. ‘Ghee’ stands for infinite love which endures the anguish of separation from God. Testing the pudding (that is formed by mixing these three, milk, rice and ghee) indicates the God-experience (the Brahmānubhava) of a liberated soul (*muktapuruṣa*). This experience should grow more intense as time passes. It should go on flourishing more and more every moment, filling the cup of bliss to overflowing. This desire is reflected in their saying that, as they eat, the pudding should trickle along the forearm to the elbow.

In the previous Pāsuram, beginning with *Mālē*, the gōpikas have asked for the conch, the drum (*paṇai*), singers of benediction, auspicious wick-stand, flagstaff and awning. Thus it is clearly indicated that the self will be endowed with a form that is identical with the Lord’s. Liberated souls thus achieve close similarity with the Supreme Self and are equipped with implements that resemble those of the Supreme. As the liberated soul crosses the borders of Primeval Nature and prepares to take a plunge in the river Virajā, Messengers of Vaikuṇṭha (*Ātivāhikapuruṣas*) appear before him equipped with trumpets, conchs, musical instruments, auspicious wick-stand and other such articles and accompanied by singers of benediction to honour him with a welcome reception. Such an honour has been indicated in the previous Pāsuram.

As soon as the self completes the bath in the river Virajā, the Lord of Vaikuṇṭha Himself appears; and under His command the divine damsels, dressed in bright ornaments and raiment, decorate the liberated self with ornaments and raiment similar to those worn by the Supreme. This process is described in the early part of this Pāsuram. Thereafter, the liberated self joins

the Nityasūras, the Ever-wise, and the Lord of the Heavenly Abode. He is now free from all the anguish of the life of bondage-to-birth; and he enjoys, with perfect love and in calm repose, God and His glorious and auspicious attributes. This guṇānubhava is suggested in this Pāśuram. Normally, these experiences of having close similarity with Him and of enjoying His qualities will be available in a different world after this body drops down. But the gōpikas pray that they should be granted these experiences here and now and while in this body, soon after they complete the Mārgasīrṣa Bath.



PĀŚURAM XXVIII

PREFACE.

The gōpikas tell Kṛṣṇa that the purpose in going to him is to accomplish the Mārgaśīrṣa bath; and they seek from him the requisites for that ritual. Later, they pray for ornaments, garments and food for conjoint enjoyment. Kṛṣṇa knows what they have in their minds. He knows that what they ask for are not the requisites connected with the worldly ritual, and that they seek the fruit of spiritual attainment. But he wants to hear this directly from them in their own words. So he observes: "O gōpikas, the things you have asked for are quite good. But you have asked me to examine your demands and then grant them. I cannot guess what you mean by this. By this ritual, you expect to receive magnificent ornaments, excellent food and other pleasures. Should you not have some authentic fitness to deserve them? When you expect a particular benefit, you should have made an effort to get it. By merely putting forward a demand for it, you will not get it. Only when you deserve it can I give it to you. So let me know how you are qualified to receive it. When you want a particular object, you must secure the means to earn it. Could you lay hold upon any such means to realise your object?" The gōpikas open their hearts to him when they give their reply to him in this Pāśuram.

What the gōpikas aspire for is consecrated service in everlasting company with God, that is the highest end they find worth pursuing. They have not earned any particular qualification for it. They firmly believe that the Lord alone is the means to attain Him. They know that all other means, which they may cultivate, are obstacles to attaining Him. They entertain no thought of reaching Him by performing works, or by acquiring knowledge or by worshipping Him with devotion. Their conviction is that He alone will enable them to attain Himself. The gōpikas elucidate in this Pāśuram what submission people who have a similar conviction should make before the Lord. People who approach God with

strong faith must have great relish in attaining Him. Without that taste, no activity is possible. It is enough if they have that strong relish for him; nothing more is needed. The gōpikas have, time and again, submitted that they have gone to him "only to sing his benediction," or because they "desire him only" or to request him "to cast his gracious looks on them." By such averments they have made it clear that they desire nothing else. In that manner, they have shown their intense longing for him and relish for things concerning him. But because they have asked Kṛṣṇa to examine their demand and then favour them with what they want, he is investigating whether the gōpikas have adopted any other means than him. Though they have prayed to him 'to show them mercy' and 'to do favour to them,' he is making a scrutiny whether, contrary to their prayer to him, they have put their trust in the works that they have done, or in the knowledge they have acquired or in the devotion to God which they have cultivated, as a means to attaining Him. The gōpikas impress upon him that they have nothing to fall back upon, nothing to claim as their own, no other means at all, and that he is their prop and means.

Those who put their trust in Him as the only means to attain Him should make the following submission in his presence:

1. that there is no satkarma, meritorious work, that they have done as a means to attaining Him;
2. that they have no deserts to qualify them for His grace and that they are humble and unworthy;
3. that they know that their only merit (sukṛtam) consists in having for their Lord One who is perfect with all auspicious attributes;
4. that they know that they have an inseparable connection with that Perfect One;
5. that they seek His pardon for all the outrages committed by them unawares and for all the offences done in the mistaken idea that they are rendering Him services;
6. that they invoke His aid as their only means and pray that H may be pleased to do them favour.

They have sought to attain their objective adopting it as their means as well. Their own sense of unworthiness and their humility qualify them to attain God. The gōpikas find that the time is ripe for attaining their goal; and so declare their unworthiness in very clear terms. The Āchāryas, sages of the past, the Ālwārs and other saints, who have accepted God both as the supreme objective to be attained and as the certain means of attaining Him, have displayed the above-mentioned six qualifications. When Vibhīṣana seeks refuge in Śrī Rāma he submits: “*Rāvaṇo nāma durvṛttaḥ Rākṣasō Rakṣasēsvaraḥ tasyāha manujō bhrūtā Vibhīṣana iti srutaḥ*. My brother is the well-known Rāvaṇa, notorious for his wicked conduct. He is the King of Rākṣasas; himself a demon, he can command others to be like him. After him I was born of the same parents. I am Vibhīṣana. Born of the same mother (to whose womb Rāvaṇa has brought great discredit by his wickedness) and worthy to follow him as a younger brother and subject to his control, I have become more widely known with a record of bad conduct for myself.” Thus does Vibhīṣana declare his unfitness for consideration at the very outset. The gōpikas, too, make a similar submission: “We are worse than cattle; we attend on them and earn a living. Such is our colossal ignorance.” Thus do they declare their unworthiness.

The Ālwārs, too, have declared their lack of worthiness. Śrī Yāmunāchārya has gone a step further and craved for pardon for the offences previously committed by him: “*Prasida madvṛtta machinta yitwā*—Do not rake up my past conduct. Ignore it and show me mercy.” Śrī Rāmānujāchārya in his composition *Śaraṇāgati gadya* mentions all his lapses without leaving any and prays for pardon: *Sarvānaśēṣataḥ kṣamasva*. The gōpikas also plead for similar pardon.

The gōpikas elucidate in this Pāṣuram all the six pleas advanced by supplicants who believe in God as the only means of realising Him.

1. **Satkarmābbhāva vijñāpana**: declaration of dissociation from all good works;
2. **Svanikarṣūnusandhāna**: Practice of humility and a sense of unworthiness;
3. **Īśwara guṇapūrti**: Proclamation of the perfection of God and His attributes;

4. Sambandha Jñāna: Awareness of inseparable connection with Him;
5. Pūrvāparādhā kṣamaṇa: Seeking pardon for past offences;
6. Bhagavadēkōpāyatva swikāra: Acceptance of God as the only means with a request to favour fulfilment of the aspiration.

Now that the time is ripe for realisation of their longing, the gōpikas open their hearts and make a clean confession to Kṛṣṇa. A patient makes a frank statement without any reservation before the doctor about the cause of his disease, his violations of rules of diet and similar other lapses. The gōpikas, likewise, make a clean breast of their ailment of love of God, and the sufferings caused by it; and seek a remedy from the physician, Śrīkṛṣṇa. For diseases of the body, the cause and the remedy, the doctor and the drug, the diet prescribed and the diet prohibited—are all different from each other. But for this disease of love of God, God is both the cause and the remedy. He is both the physician and the diet, prescribed or prohibited. Among the Thousand Names of Viṣṇu (Viṣṇu Sahasranāma) are included 'Oṣadham,' medicine, and 'Vaidyaḥ,' physician. To those who suffer from the disease of love, He becomes the curing medicine. To those who are free from it, He becomes the enjoyable nectar. The gōpikas have found in Kṛṣṇa a proficient doctor who administers efficacious drugs; so they explain to him the nature of their ailment and their previous violations of regulations. They request him to pardon their lapses and cure them of their malady. This God-medicine can tolerate lapses and check their ill-effects. This God-physician is generous in forgiving: it is enough that lapses are mentioned and pardon sought. He will see to it that the patients do not have any further trouble. Again, those who believe in God as the only effective instrument should give up all other means. How far they can do this varies according to their states of spiritual growth. He who has previously adopted other means like Karma, Jñāna and Bhakti should declare that he has 'renounced' them. He who is incapable of practising them should confess his "incapacity to adopt those methods." He who knows that these methods should be put into practice and yet keeps away from them because they do not fit in with his true nature should say so specifically. He who is completely

ignorant that those methods exist should openly declare that he is unaware of the existence of any other means or instruments. The gōpikas come under the last category. They are not aware of the existence of any other method than Kṛṣṇa. So they submit: "Lord, we have nothing to give up."

*Kaṛavaigaḷ piṇṣēṇṟu kānamśērduṇbōm
 aṛivonṟum illāda vāykkulattu, undannai
 ppīṛavi perundanai punṇiyam yāmudaiyōm
 kuraivonṟumillāda Gōvindā! undannōḍu
 uṛavēl namakkiṅgolikka voliṇyādu!
 aṛiyāda piḷḷaigaḷōm, anbinal undannai
 ccīrupēr aḷaittanavum śīṛiyaruḷādē
 īṛaivā nī tārāy paṛai ēlōrempāvāy.*

Summary.

We are people who roam about, following the cattle into the woods where they graze. We eat to live observing no regulations, not even of cleanliness. That you have chosen to be born and be one of us in this gōpa community, which is devoid of all knowledge, confers on us a great privilege. And that is all the merit we have. Gōvindā! How innumerable our deficiencies may be, you, the blameless one, are here to make them up. Lord! Our kinship with you is something that cannot be annulled. We are rustic girls, unaware of the civilised world's courtesies. Out of our love we have called you by a small, inferior name. We pray that you do not get irritated at our want of courtesy. Please bear with us and favour us with the drum (*paṛai*) that we ask for

Commentary

1. *Kaṛavaigaḷ piṇṣēṇṟu kānam śērduṇbōm*

"Following the cattle, we go into the woods; and there we take food."

In the previous Pāsuram, Kṛṣṇa has asked them what spiritual practices they have cultivated to entitle them to the enjoyment

of the dish of sweet pudding (bhōgam). To this the gōpikas give this reply: "The preceptors to whom we cling are the cattle. The place we reach by following them is the forest. What we do after reaching the forest is to take food for the sustenance of the body."

In the previous Pāsuram, the gōpikas have expressed their longing for the bhōga, the sweet dish of enjoyment, that a liberated soul experiences in company with the Supreme Being in the Heavenly Abode. The Upaniṣads have elucidated what spiritual preparation is needed to achieve it. The Vēdas and their auxiliaries, Vēdāṅgas, should be thoroughly studied and their full meaning understood. The rites prescribed therein should be performed in consonance with the regulations laid down for the caste (the Varṇa) and the stage of life (the āśrama) of the individual aspirant. By this performance he will be freed from sin; and the mind is purified. Then the senses should be withdrawn from their objects of pleasure; and the mind thus dissociated from senses and their objects should be turned inward on the self. After self-realisation, the mind should be concentrated on the immanent Supreme Self. With the mind thus centred on Him, the aspirant should contemplate on the form he has visioned and constantly render worship and offer salutations to Him; and hear and meditate on His glories so as never to miss Him even for a moment. Such perennial contemplation and meditation will enable him to be rid of the pile of sin and merit, which is the cause of rebirth. Thus liberated, he is able to enjoy the sweet dish of God-experience. Knowledge of God's nature is the means to perennial recollection of the form visioned by the aspirant. The means to acquire that knowledge is introspection. Conquest of senses leads to introspection. To overcome the senses, sins should be eliminated. This becomes possible only through the performance of prescribed rites and duties. Knowledge of the Vēdas and their true meaning and import is essential to perform the duties. This knowledge can be had only by reverent study under the guidance of a preceptor. In this process of spiritual discipline, the first stage is *Gurukula vāsa*, residence with the preceptor. The gōpikas, therefore, now deal with the nature of the hermitage where they have received the initial lessons in spiritual discipline.

Only those who are marked out by purity of heritage (vamśa), of scholarship (vidya) and of conduct (vṛtta) deserve to be preceptors. As the cows belong to the animal species, they cannot claim

purity of birth; they are devoid of even a speck of knowledge; in fact, men without knowledge are usually compared to beasts. Men who are heinous in conduct are identified with brutes: *nṛpaṣu*. So the cattle are examples of low origin and ignoble behaviour. The *gōpikas* cling to such animals as their *āchāryas*. So it is clear that they have no means of attaining God. Again, the *āchāryas* should be ripe alike in years and in wisdom and accomplished in detachment from worldly attractions, so that other scholars, ripe in knowledge, may seek their guidance. In tune with their wisdom, they should be men of exemplary character. They should be seers and sages and advocates of theism. They should be well-versed in all the *Darśanas* of philosophy; and be competent, by citing authorities, to contradict and set aside the arguments of perverse critics and revilers of *Vēdas* and *Scriptures*. While attending to essential duties, they should always earnestly abide in the Supreme Being. It is from such preceptors that the aspirant should acquire knowledge by prostrating before them (*praṇipāta*); by questioning them time and again with avidity, *paripraśna*; and by rendering them devout services (*sēva*). The *gōpikas* follow and serve the cattle; and so they declare that they have no qualification for attaining God. They say: "The cows appear to be much more learned than we are. They shine as *Vaṣiṣṭhas* before us. They deserve to lead the way for us. In ignorance we are a little higher than they. That is why we follow the cows, though they stand for crass ignorance in the world. Taking pity on our innocence, the cows show us the way; and we eagerly follow them. Instead of sages, we have cows as pathfinders. Again, we do not tend the cows selflessly as a matter of duty incumbent on our community. No; we tend only the cows that yield us milk. We are moved by selfish interest only; we are not altruistic."

The disciples should abide by the preceptors who have created in them a taste for spiritual matters and fostered it in them, in the same way as *Bharadvāja* has adhered to *Vālmiki*, in the same way as people parched with thirst cling to water-sources. Once they secure the stage of God-realisation, the disciples are unable to remain aloof from preceptors for fear that some danger may befall them. So they go after their preceptors, in the same way as the calf goes after the cow, as *Lakṣmaṇa*, armed with bow and arrows, follows *Rāma*. "With such earnestness we follow the

cows, carrying staffs and fastening-strands. It is they, the cows, that impart knowledge to us; it is them we wish to attain." Thus do the gōpikas expose their ignorance to Kṛṣṇa. "When we follow the cows, we are led into a forest. We would have earned some merit if, though following cattle, we are led to sacred places like Ayōdhya and Mathura where good, meritorious people live. We will have earned much merit if we have spent even one night, (though not deliberately, yet out of necessity, owing to rain forbidding journey) in a place where great saints who have earned God's favour live. No such opportunities do we have. We merely follow the cattle; we go to places where fodder and water are available for cattle. We do not consider whether they are sacred or not. The woods we go to are not Daṇḍakāraṇya, Naimiśāraṇya or Badarikāśrama or the like, in which ṛṣis have done penance and visioned God. It is a sheer forest (Kānam) covered with prickly pear (pallēru) in which savages armed with bows and arrows roam about hunting beasts. Bṛndāvana is a wilderness of prickly plants—in which each footfall is rewarded with a prick—and a rendezvous for wild beasts and hunters. How can we have any merit, any fitness, when what we follow are cows and where we go to are forests? Be pleased to consider our plight."

Then Kṛṣṇa makes a few observations: "You may not have followed good and worthy men; you may not have lived in sacred places. But you are discharging the duty prescribed for your community by following the cattle into the woods and tending them. Is that not your merit? Besides, retiring into the forest is imposed on the anchorites as a matter of obligation, as an *āśrama dharma*. You may not be *vānaprastas*. But it is the duty of disciples to take the cows belonging to the āchārya into the woods and graze them. Ṛṣis repair to forests for their penance. So going to the forest or living there is not opposed to Dharma or righteous conduct. Thus your going to the woods, following the cattle, comes under discharge of obligations imposed on your community and prescribed at particular stages of life (Varṇāśrama dharma). It can be called Karma Yōga. So you have this means of karmayōga to have your wish fulfilled. Why then do you say that you have nothing to fall back upon?" The gōpikas have the reply ready: "We are not going into the forest in the course of discharging our duties; nor for the fulfilment of an obligation to the āchārya, nor for doing penance. After going to the forest,

we discharge no obligation; we perform no work. We simply eat. It may perhaps turn out to be a karma, if we bathe and eat; we do not know even that. We reach the forest and soon after, we eat. We cannot claim to be such people as are in the habit of giving food to others. 'Uṇbām': We eat for ourselves only. That is all that we know." The gōpikas are afraid that Kṛṣṇa may somehow manage to show that they have some qualification or fitness and find an excuse for not taking them under his protection. So they clarify that what they do does not come under karmayōga; and that they have absolutely no qualification or worth. They plead that taking food is essentially a physical act, meant merely for sustaining the body. "If we take food in another's house, it becomes sacred, because it is offered to the deities in his house before it is served. If we eat in a temple, the food becomes consecrated as it is offered to God before it is served. Thus, in either case, the food being consecrated might be effective in cleansing us of sins. But as we eat our food in the forest, this possibility is eliminated. We are not even aware that one must sit and eat; and that one must be facing east when one sits to eat. We have no idea of such or other regulations about eating. As we follow the cattle, we eat standing or walking. We eat to satisfy hunger. We do not know whether what we eat is a left-over from another's plate, or whether it is a forbidden article of diet or whether it is stale and stinking. This is how we are practising karmayōga!" Lord Kṛṣṇa then enquires: "Is going into woods, following cattle, a flaw? Is it objectionable to take food there? I do the same things that you do." The gōpikas reply with resourcefulness: "Lord, these acts count as lapses in people like us who are eager to propitiate hunger and sustain life. They cannot cause any stigma to sages like you. When enlightened sages do the same things that common people do, no blemish affect them because of their effulgence: *tējō viśeṣeṇa pratyavāyo navidyatē*. We are the ignorant folk. You are the wise sages." Kṛṣṇa extends the argument: "You may not have acquired knowledge in this present life. But owing to the good deeds accumulated in the long succession of previous births, you may have become divested of all sins and your minds cleansed. Nothing then can prevent knowledge from illumining your minds. We cannot determine that simply because you appear low by the standards of birth and karma now, you are deficient in knowledge.

You say you are the people who go tending the cows. Granted. Do you not know about the life of Dharmavyādha, who used to kill the cows and sell their meat? Though he lived by selling meat, he was such a great sage that he could clear the doubts of learned people. Jaḍa Bharata who sauntered in the woods, eating whatever he could lay hands upon, was a great sage. Birth is no criterion to determine the knowledge one possesses. Vidura is low by birth; but he is a sage by his knowledge. Śābari, like you, was born in a low community; but she was an adept in righteousness. Absence of karmayōga does not count if illumined knowledge and devotion are present. A person even in the meanest occupation and with the vilest practices turns to be a righteous man, provided he has knowledge and devotion. *Kṣipram bhavati dharmātmā*. So you need not think low of yourselves." When Kṛṣṇa thus suggests that though they are without karmayōga, they may still be having knowledge and devotion as means, the gōpikas apprehend danger; and so protest how they are without any means, without knowledge and devotion. As they approach Kṛṣṇa as the only means of their attaining him, they declare that they have with them no means of their own to realise their aspiration.

2 *Aṛivonṟu millāda vāy kkulattu:*

"We are born in the gōpa community which lays no claim to knowledge."

He who adopts Karmayōga (the means of works) also should have knowledge of the true nature of self; and thereby he knows that he is different from Primeval Nature (*Prakṛti*) and that he belongs to God. So he performs works without attachment to them and offers the fruit of his works to God only. This true knowledge of the self should be an adjunct to works as karmāṅga; the gōpikas deny having such knowledge. They further deny having knowledge that manifests itself as devotion to God and to none else. This devotion comes as a result of constant meditation on the true nature of God who alone is to be attained; and God's true nature is understood only by having knowledge of the self. "aṛivonṟu millai: We do not even have any one type of knowledge." We do not have knowledge which is an adjunct of works. We do not have knowledge of the true nature of self. We do not have knowledge which manifests itself as devotion. We are thus devoid of

karmayōga, jñānayōga and bhaktiyōga; we are without any means which can secure for us our objective, namely, the attainment of God. There is no scope for our acquiring any such knowledge, either. We eat and we have no knowledge; (*uṇḍōm-arivonṟu millāda*); the food we eat is not such as will promote knowledge: *Āhāra śuddhau sattwa śuddhi*: pure food makes for a pure mind. When the food we take is impure, how can we have minds receptive to knowledge? The mind is formed by the fundamental qualities of sattwa, rajas and tamas that are inherent in the food we eat. The solid, indigestible part of the food is thrown out of the body as faeces. The digestible part is assimilated into blood and marrow and brain and nerves. The essence turns into mind. This is how Chāndōgya Upaniṣad divides the effects of food. As the gōpikas do not observe regulations governing food, they do not earn fitness to receive knowledge. Moreover, as they are born in the community of gōpas, they are not even aware that there is such knowledge existing. Their very birth, apart from their food-habits, is quite uncongenial to the acquisition of knowledge. When Vibhiṣaṇa seeks refuge with Rāma, he mentions his brother's name and says that Rāvaṇa is not only wicked in name but has justified it by his wicked conduct; *Rāvaṇō nāma, durvṛttah rākṣasaḥ*. The gōpikas here say: "We are without knowledge; we are born in the gōpa community." Their birth itself in gōpa community is responsible for their lack of knowledge; they are born ignorant. Lord Kṛṣṇa counters: "You say you have nothing. You have nothing of karma to your credit. Your knowledge is next to nothing. Your devotion is negligible. You have no worth at all! Could there be any merit which you can claim for yourselves?"

3. *Āykkulattu undannaipīraṇi perundanai puṇṇiyam yāmuḍai yōm.*

"All the merit we have is that you have chosen to take birth in our community, which does not even smack of knowledge."

"Lord, when we say we have no merit, we mean that we have no merit of our own, earned by ourselves. Without any effort on our part, Merit Itself has taken birth in our community and has grown with the milk and curds offered by us." Lord Kṛṣṇa, verily, is that Merit; and that Merit was born in the ignorant gōpa community. Attaining the Lord is the result of merit. Merit is of two kinds: Sādhya punya, merit acquired, and siddha-

puṇya, merit fulfilled. The merit that is acquired by self-effort through works, knowledge and devotion comes under the first category. This acquired merit evokes God's grace and becomes thus a means to God-attainment. The second, merit fulfilled, is God Himself; and He Himself becomes the means to attain Himself. All other types of merit are meant to attain Him only. It all amounts to saying that those, who put all their faith in Him as the sole instrument to attain Himself, should refrain from practising any other method. Then the Lord, of His own accord, goes to them and saves them. The gōpikas have not practised karma or jñāna or bhakti as means that will secure for them the attainment of God. They have all along held a strong faith that Kṛṣṇa alone is their saviour. The very Embodiment of Knowledge has chosen to take birth in a community that is devoid of knowledge; and that occurrence, the gōpikas believe, is their special privilege. They do not observe righteousness for their own sake. It is their good fortune that Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is Righteousness Himself and who establishes righteousness, is one of them; and so to them he is both the Upāya the means, and the Upēya, the end to be attained. After Kṛṣṇa's descent into their community, all the sentient and insentient objects there have reached their highest end, the *parama puruṣārtha*, without any effort on their part. The Supreme Lord who has the Blessed Everwise to follow him wherever He goes, is born in a community that follows the cattle. The Lord who resides on the Ocean of Milk has come into the cottage of the people who live in the forest. The Lord who is praised by the Upaniṣads as the Immanent One in all objects and yet as One who remains a witness and does not consume the fruit of any action is born in a community whose very nature is unregulated eating. The Supreme Self, who does not disclose His face even to the most learned sages, has chosen to descend into a family which is devoid of all knowledge. The King of the Blessed has become the leader of the gōpālas. What greater merit should the gōpikas possess? So they say: "You have not come into our community to leave us behind. What more merit need we have after we have you? The whole world eagerly wishes to have you; but you yourself have wished to be in our community. We have such merit as to deserve to have with us, in our community, you, who are the Merit of all types of merit, in fact the very Source of all merit. Those who acquire other merits, leaving you apart,

will realise fruits other than you who are the Greatest Merit. Should you not be with those who want to attain you alone (you, who are, verily, Merit itself) and be as one among them? We have you as one of us. You are the one who is to give us the *paṇai*. You alone are the person to render yourself into our possession. Seeing our exceptional good fortune, great saints, who have known your glory, have complimented us:

*Ahī bhāgyamahō bhāgyam nandagōpa vrajankasām
yan mitram paramānandam pūrṇam Bruhma sanātanam:*

‘Indeed, the people in Nandavraja are unique in their good fortune. The Eternal Supreme who is Infinite Bliss has come to move with them as their friend and companion.’ “We have not earned your kinship by any effort of ours. It has come to us by the mere accident of our birth in the *gōpa* community, and this kinship will last as long as we last. This affinity is not something that has not been there at one time and has come into existence now; nor is it to prevail now and disappear in the future. To attain to this merit, there is no regulation as to what things are to be done and what are to be avoided. Both these, namely, merit and sin (which result from right action and wrong action respectively) are obstacles to attaining Him. People in the world differ in their concept of merit. Each individual has his own idea as to what constitutes merit. But so far as we, *gōpikas*, are concerned, Kṛṣṇa alone is our conception of Merit. This Merit is one and the same to all of us. This is our unique merit which entitles us to attain Him.” Kṛṣṇa then raises another question: “You say you have absolutely no knowledge. At the same time you aver you possess merit. The merit that is essential for the attainment of God is knowledge; and you deny having that knowledge. Are not your words self-contradictory?” Then the *gōpikas* further elucidate their previous statements: “There is no self-contradiction in our words. We have submitted that we have not earned any of the means of karma, *jñāna* or *bhakti* with a view to employing it to secure for us attainment of God. As the only effective instrument that can take us to God is God, and as He is already with us, we have stated that we hold the requisite merit. What we have said is that we have no knowledge of our own earning; but we have not denied the merit that we derive from you in our midst. Thus there is no contradiction in our words. Should

we have any merit *of our own*, it will, besides not being helpful to us, act as a heavy weight suspended from the neck and effectively prevent us from reaching you. We have said that there is no such impediment, so that it will urge the flow of your mercy towards us:

4. *Kuṟaivoṇṟu millāda gōvindā!*

“O Gōvindā, you who have nothing wanting.”

“Our merit suffers no defect; it has nothing wanting. The merit that appears in the world is the result of some one’s aspiration. Merit does not exist by itself. It is static. It is the good result of man’s effort, made with a particular desire. But what constitutes our merit is God Himself. This Merit does not depend upon the desire or effort of any one. This exists by Itself; It is dynamic. So our merit does not suffer from the defect of dependence upon any one’s desire or effort. It is alive and dynamic.

Again, the merit that people strive for has certain limits and limitations. The merit or the good that results from man’s efforts is limited; and it varies according to the nature and extent of that effort. The merit acquired by one may bring that one wealth and prosperity; another’s merit may get him admission into heaven. But no single merit can bring about worldly pleasures and heavenly residence and liberation from the cycle of birth-and-death—all these together. The merit that is secured in the world yields result in a limited sphere. But our Merit is God Himself and so is complete and perfect; Its results have no limits. Our Merit does not suffer from the defect of restriction or limitation. Again, the merit acquired in the world is strongly opposed by sin; and if in this conflict sin is mightier, merit may not yield fruit. But our Merit, being God, can chase even the strongest opposing sin to a far distance and see that it does not contaminate us. It is all-powerful; It can exterminate even the most monstrous sins. Thus It does not suffer from the defect of being obstructed by sin.

We are devoid of all knowledge. But you are complete. You do not lack anything. Before starting for expeditions, kings get the roads levelled; the knolls are levelled and the depressions filled, so as to make the road even. So also you start with your knowledge and power and fulness and perfection; and you can march forward only after you fill our ignorance, powerlessness and imperfection. Your perfection is meant to fill our crass

ignorance with your full knowledge. Your fulness is sure to eliminate every defect or lapse, and fill any deficiency or want anywhere, at any time. So we request you to fill us, so that our deficiency is covered up." Kṛṣṇa then remarks: "How is it you plead want of wisdom while you know so much? You say that God fills you with knowledge and power; and that because He is perfect you also are perfect by His kinship. Does not this thinking show that you know your nature? Why then have you said that you do not know your true nature?" In reply, the gōpikas accost him: "Gōvindā!" and say: "When you do not have knowledge of your true nature, how can you expect us to have knowledge of our nature? You are to be in the midst of the blessed Ever-wise (nityasūras). How is it you have left them and are in the midst of cows? It is our good fortune that you have forgotten your true nature. It is that forgetfulness on your part that has given you to us. If you have remembered your nature or our nature, you will not have been available to us at all. You are perfect and independent. We are full of lapses. If you have thought of your independence or of our imperfections, you will not have joined us. Forgetting both these, you have come into the midst of cows; and it is this act of yours that has made us bold to aspire for your union."

The Supreme Phenomenon, Paratattva, has this shortcoming; that He will not allow other than those who are like Him or who are almost equal to them to have a glimpse of Him. This shortcoming is not to be found in the easily-accessible incarnation of Kṛṣṇa. He mingles even with those who are not conscious that they too may have some defects. He has grazed the cattle, raised the mountain and held it aloft for their protection and considered being coronated as 'Gōvindā' as a great honour and distinction. Even if we have nothing to claim as our own, we suffer from no deficiency even because we have our Gōvindā, who is ever perfect in knowledge, power and love and other great virtues. Gōvindā! You who have moved about in the attire of a gōpāla carrying a bamboo-pipe in one hand and a noose-strand to fasten calves in another, your locks of hair covered with the dust raised by the cattle, and your feet tingling with the bells of anklets, are the same person who later counselled Arjuna, sitting on his chariot, to give up all instruments of help and take refuge in you as the only means

of salvation: *Sarvadharmān parityajya, māmēkam śaraṇam vraja*. What we say and do is exactly what you have instructed Arjuna to do. You must receive us and do us favour." Kṛṣṇa then says: "You yourselves say that I depend on none and that I am completely independent. In that case, even if I be full and perfect, I might exercise my independence and refuse to give anything to you or to any one. Is there any compulsion that those who have should give to those who do not have?"

5. *Undannōḍu uravēl namakkiṅgoḷikka voḷiyādu*

"The kinship we have with you is such that it cannot be severed even if we wish to cut it off."

"You may happen to lose your fulness and perfection; but you cannot sever our kinship even if you wish to. We cannot break it, even if we want to. It is a kinship by birth. Can a father, howsoever independent, disown his children? Independence does not hold when children are concerned. Our kinship is closer and stronger than that. The connection, which links father and children on the physical plane of body, may come to an end with the death of the body. But our kinship is inseparable like that of an attribute to its possessor, like that of brightness to the sun. Unless there exists some object possessing a quality, that quality has no existence by itself. Brightness does not exist without the sun. We cannot be shown to exist separately from you. We are souls; and even the Omnipotent God cannot separate us from the Supreme Soul. We cease to exist without you. Likewise, you exist not, if we do not. You are the first letter 'A,' and we the last letter 'M' in Praṇava (*Aum*). If Praṇava is to retain its true nature, both Akāra and Makāra should remain in tact. They are inalienably knit together; they are inseparable. If you do not fulfil our purpose and give us yourself, Akāra will be missing from Praṇava. Akāra means 'Saviour.' Only when protection is given to us Akāra will remain in Ōmkāra; otherwise it will be obliterated. This is the kinship between the self and the Supreme Self as enunciated by the sages. Let that be.

We are the children respectively of a brother and his sister. This relationship is well-known; it cannot be hidden from any one. The kinship between the soul and the Over-Soul may be kept

hidden; perhaps it may even be denied. But your relationship with us is open and directly provable. We have accepted and welcomed you as our Saviour, Gōvinda! Should you not feel the obligation of bringing our undertaking to fruition? Is it not for us that you have strained yourself in raising the mountain aloft, and earned the appellation of 'Gōvinda'? Śiṣupāla, who has denounced your title of 'Gōvinda' has perished. But you have taken upon yourself as your own the entire undertaking of Arjuna, as he has recognised your title and bowed before it. We pray that you will, in the same way, do us favour by completing our undertaking in recognition of the relationship we have invoked—You as Saviour and we as supplicants for grace. The Supreme Phenomenon can be understood only by accepting the authority of the word (Śabda pramāṇa); and not by direct vision or inferential perception. Those who wish to know the Supreme by Pratyakṣa and Anumāna standards, by direct vision or inferential perception, fail to understand and attain Him. Those who accept and adopt the authority of the word, Śabda pramāṇa can certainly attain Him. O Kṛṣṇa! we do not wish to attain you by our efforts. We are resolved to attain you through your good offices only. We have come to know of your nature and of our nature and the kinship between us two by means of the authority of the word; and not through the other authorities of direct vision or inferential perception. Thus have we reached the conclusion that our kinship is inseparable. So you only have to save us; and that, too, for your own sake only.

We are the gōpikas and you are the Gōvinda; and this relationship indicates that our protection is an inescapable obligation for you. As you have saved the gōpa community and the herds of cows by holding aloft the Gōvardhana mountain as a protecting umbrella, the relationship of the saviour and the saved has sprung between you and us. As you are coronated as 'Gōvinda,' you have become the owner and we your belongings; thus is established the connection of the owner with his possessions. As you are our Lord, we have formed another affiliation with you; you are the Ruler and we the ruled. You are both father and mother to the gōpālas. Hence our close affinity: You are the cause and we are the effects. As we hold the conviction that our Kṛṣṇa is our soul, we establish close coherence with you—you as soul and we as body. United with you, we are alive; separated from

you, we are dead; thus is established the relationship with you as sustainer and we as the sustained. As you pervade and permeate us always and make us happy, we have between us the relationship of the pervader and the permeated. Thus O Kṛṣṇa! our kinship with you is 'so close that it cannot be sundered.'

Those who accept Him as the only means to attain Him should hold that knowledge and devotion which they have earned can never become means to their objective; and they should realise that the Lord Himself is the only means that can bring Him within their reach and facilitate their easy grasp of Him. They should realise that their kinship with God is inseparable; and that separated from Him they have no existence at all.

The gōpikas urge Kṛṣṇa further:

"O Kṛṣṇa! on the day you lifted Gōvardhana, do you remember what you said, seeing us aghast and trembling at a distance: 'I am not gandharva; I am not immortal; I am not a yakṣa nor a rākṣhasa; I am your kin; I am one of yourselves.. Have you forgotten these words? You cannot now give up your kinship with us; nor can it be annulled by any one. Therefore, we pray that you should become an instrument in securing yourself for us.' Kṛṣṇa then angrily remarks: "O, so I see, I have now become Gōvinda and you the gōpikas! What has happened to this kinship so long? Have you all along forgotten it? You have just now come to remember it. Why have you called me all along by names which touch sensitive spots and cause pain?" The gōpikas have praised him previously by his other names, like *Nārāyaṇa*, *Dēvādīdēva*, God of gods! *Kṣīrābdhi Śayana*, One who rests on the ocean of milk! Kṛṣṇa is irritated when he is addressed by such names as *Nārāyaṇa* which remind him of his Supreme status which he has given up in disgust. He has come down from His Heavenly Abode into the gōpa community so as to be accessible to all, mixed freely with gōpikas and their cows, forged bonds of kinship with them based on his birth among them; and, for their sake, put himself to the strain of lifting up a mountain and earned the title of 'Gōvinda.' Why should the gōpikas think of other names, while 'Gōvinda' which concerns them so intimately is readily available? This is Kṛṣṇa's grievance.

6. *Aṛiyāda piḷḷai gaḷom ambināl:*

“ We are girls with little knowledge; and we have spoken out of love.”

“ Pray, pardon us for our fault, which is due to our ignorance. We are young girls; therefore excuse us. We do love you much; so please pardon us. We have spoken thus in a lapse of memory and out of ignorance and in a fit of self-forgetting love. We are born without knowledge; and you have made us more ignorant. Looking on you, we forget ourselves and become unaware of what we say or what we do. We pray you, pardon us.

Does a lover sharing the couch with his beloved get angry when her foot touches him? How is it you pick holes in our conduct, only to get annoyed with us who love you? Do you not know the nature of love?

7. *Undannaic ciṟupēraḷait tanavum śiṛiyaruḷādē*

“ Would you get annoyed with us for calling you by a small name and refuse to show us mercy?” After the Supreme Being left His Heavenly Abode and reached Nandavraja and after He acquired the appellation ‘Gōvinda’ by lifting up Gōvardhana mountain, His earlier names like ‘Nārāyaṇa’ have become comparatively insignificant. Supremacy (Paratva), Sovereignty (Iśvaratva) and Pervasiveness (vyāpakatva), are the natural qualities of the Supreme Soul. There is nothing special about them. The Most High Himself becomes accessible to all as Kṛṣṇa; and leads a life that is inferior to that of the gōpikas who are themselves very low in learning, knowledge and conduct. He meekly submits to be bound and beaten and goes about tending the cows and deems it a high privilege to be named after them as *Gōvinda*. Such easy accessibility, which undermines the quality of His supremacy, is something exceptional and unique; and the name that suggests it, *Gōvinda*, is therefore a great name. The name that indicates supremacy becomes, in comparison, a small name. When a person is in jail, he is known not by name but only by a number that is given to him when he is admitted there. But when he is released and when he becomes a king, he will naturally feel offended, if he is called by the number he has borne while in prison. Kṛṣṇa has felt sorely offended when he is called ‘Nārāyaṇa,’ which name indicates his position as Causal Phenomenon and

Pervasive Immanence. That name 'Nārāyaṇa' has now become a small, insignificant name. When the very gōpikas to whom he thinks he belongs and for whose sake he has become one among those whom he is normally to command, call him by the name 'Nārāyaṇa,' Kṛṣṇa has reason to grow wild with irritation. Is it not wrong on the part of the beloved ones (the gōpikas) to ignore the lover's name 'Gōvinda,' which signifies their love and their claim on him as belonging to them? Instead, they call him 'Nārāyaṇa' like all others.' It may have some justification if they call him so when provoked or in anger. But how are they justified in calling him so in love? To call him 'Lord of the world,' whom it is proper to call 'lord of my life,' amounts almost to ridicule. By calling him 'Nārāyaṇa' the gōpikas may be understood to be ironically suggesting that he is more iconcerned with the world than interested in them. So it is inappropriate to call him Nārāyaṇa.

Among God's innumerable names, the name which is within easy reach of all and which yields diverse benefits is considered the greatest; and the name which is difficult of access and which has to be practised under strict regulations is deemed the lowest. Before Nārāyaṇa Aṣṭākṣari mantra, all other incantations in vogue, containing many more letters, recede in shame into the background. After Kṛṣṇa incarnates in gōpa community and becomes easy of access to all, the name 'Gōvinda' rises into prominence, as it can be invoked at any time, at any place and in any circumstances and by any person without restriction or regulation; and it is equally efficacious in yielding any benefit. And now even Aṣṭākṣari looks small and recedes before Gōvinda; it has now become a humble name. This Aṣṭākṣari is to be regarded as a great secret; it is to be imparted in a whisper; it is to be chanted in a low undertone. But Gōvinda contains only three letters; it is open to all; and it can be uttered aloud. Even people who are unclean and impure can utter this name and proclaim it in assemblies. The gōpikas seek pardon for uttering the name 'Nārāyaṇa' while 'Gōvinda' is readily available. "We have committed offence in uttering the name 'Nārāyaṇa' not once, but many times over. We have uttered "Nārāyaṇaṇē" (Nārāyaṇa only) in the opening Pāsuram itself; we have repeated it twice while awakening the gōpikas. We have further glorified the name 'Padmanābha' which again calls to mind 'Nārāyaṇa', We have accused those who intensely love you,

imputing to them dumbness and deafness and even madness. We have called one of them 'a mad girl'. We pray that you will pardon all these offences". When making a humble submission to God, a devotee shall seek pardon for all the outrages knowingly committed in thought, word and deed; and also for such offences toward God and His devotees as have been committed unawares, in the course of ministering to them. What is honestly rendered as service may sometimes turn out to be an unwitting offence. After having a glimpse of the cosmic form of Śrīkṛṣṇa, Arjuna seeks Kṛṣṇa's pardon: "Moving with you so closely all along, I have been unaware of your magnificent glory. Blinded by love and familiarity, I have committed innumerable offences while with you, sitting and strolling, taking food and lying in bed. I have called you in a familiar way 'Kṛṣṇa' 'Yāda' and 'Sakha' (friend). I now seek your pardon for all the liberties I have taken with you". Seeing Kṛṣṇa's easy informality, the gōpikas ask for his pardon for the offences committed by them when they held him only as the Supreme. They cannot refrain from seeking pardon once they approach him, despite the fact that they have all along clung to him only, in abiding love and devotion.

ŚrīKṛṣṇa then says: "Suppose I overlook your shortcomings and grant you what you want. How do the people in the world react? Do they not say how he could grant them all they want when they have nothing to their credit? To obviate such comments can you not show that you have at least some little thing to your credit?"

8. *Iṣāṇā Nītārāy Paṇai ēlōrempāvāy*

"Lord, give is the *paṇai* (the drum) that we eagerly long for." "Should you be pleased to give, who can come in the way? We are your property. You are our master. Belonging to you is natural for us; owning us is natural for you. If we forget our true nature and forget that we are yours, there is a possibility of complete erosion of our *Śeṣatva*, of our sense of belonging to you. But your consciousness of being the owner and the master does not suffer from such liability. We cannot by our ignorance damage your nature. You are the omniscient; and as the All-knowing, you can forget nothing. As you think of your own nature, saving us and fulfilling our wish become absolutely obligatory for you.

We may be ever deficient in so many ways; but it is enough for us that you ever remain perfect and blameless. We have clearly understood that if only we have no illwill towards you, you are certain to give us support. This is all that we know in all our life so long. We pray that you will fulfil our wish". The property may forget the owner; but the owner never forgets his property. Will the owner let slip the property that comes searching for him and falls into his hand? It is with such assurance as this in his acceptance of them that the gōpikas address him "Gōvinda! O Lord!" "Yadapēkṣyamapēkṣitu rasyahi tatparipūraṇa mṛṣitu rīṣaratā: Fulfilling the wish of the supplicant alone squares with the Lord's sovereignty". So the gōpikas pray that Kṛṣṇa will fulfil their wish as such gracious action fits in with his lordship. "Considering our plight, you should take pity on us. We have nothing of our own and we have no other refuge. And so you have to accomplish our task. Viewing the situation from your side you see how you, being perfect, full of knowledge and power, will have to undertake to bring about the fulfilment of our wish. Taking into account both yourself and ourselves together, even then the situation demands that you have to take our work to fruition, because our kinship with you is inseparable. From all points of view, it is obligatory for you to see that our task is successfully accomplished."

As the gōpikas seek Kṛṣṇa's favour with the firm conviction that he alone is the effective means, they declare that they have earned no merit by their works, or knowledge or conduct; and they affirm that all their merit consists in having Kṛṣṇa as one among them. They avow that Kṛṣṇa is perfect and easy of access; and that their kinship with him is close and inseparable. They pray to him that he will pardon all their offences for which they express penitence. With the firm conviction that their master and lord, Śrīkṛṣṇa, alone has the competence to accomplish the fulfilment of their objective, the gōpikas proclaim in clear terms that Bhagavān alone is their effective means and none else. This Pāṭuram is a detailed exposition of the course to be adopted by aspirants who solicit God, who is their objective, to become the means as well in attaining Him.

PĀŚURAM XXIX

PREFACE.

Dhanurmāsa Vrata is what the gōpikas have undertaken to perform, with the approval of their elders, for obtaining rain. They have launched upon this ritual of Mārgaśīrṣa Bath for the satisfaction of the elders and have come to Kṛṣṇa with the request to provide them with paṇai, a drum which is essential to complete it; and in fulfilment thereof they desire to have some ornaments and a sweet dish of pāyasam. But their inmost aspiration is quite different from it. They aspire for an inseparable association with him and abiding service to him. They have spoken in such a way as to mean by 'bath' attainment of God, and by 'paṇai' the fulfilment of the highest objective of consecrated service to God.

This rite is to be performed by all those who aspire to attain God. For this they must cultivate close links of association with those who have already established contact with God. Then they have to seek the goodwill and instruction of preceptors who are aglow with spiritual qualities like control over senses and mind. Receiving initiation from them, they must strive to understand, and meditate upon, the meaning of the mantra (incantation). When the error-prone aspirants seek to attain the independent Lord, they have to pray for the intercession of the Divine Mother to bring about their contact with Him; and this they have to do although they believe that He is their means to attain Him. It is only when they approach through her mediation that they are strengthened in their conviction that He is the only means, and that they become eligible for His gracious looks. As they then have a glimpse of the Lord, they sing His benediction and crave for His favour for self-knowledge and liberation from bondage. And only after securing this release, they can pray that they be adorned with all the ornaments of the immortals and be united with Him for eternal life. The process of liberation from bondage and the attainment of God is set, stage by stage, in the twenty seven Pāsurams; Pāsurams 28 and 29 elucidate two fundamental

principles to be understood before the rite reaches conclusion; and the last, Pāsuram XXX, deals with the fruit of fulfilment (phalaśruti).

While launching upon this ritual, the gōpikas have, at the very outset, declared that Nārāyaṇa *alone* will bestow *only on them* the needed *paṛai*: *Nārāyaṇanē namakkē paṛai taruvān*. The first pāsuram thus succinctly declares that their objective is *paṛai*; and that their means to secure it is Nārāyaṇa. Unless we know what we are after and how we are to get at it, we cannot realise what we need. He who is born in the community of human beings is a 'puruṣa'; and what he should seek in life is "Puruṣārtha." There are four kinds of objectives worth pursuing in life—Dharma (righteousness) Artha (wealth) Kāma (desire) and Mōkṣa (liberation). The first three are steps to attain the fourth. Liberation is the highest end to pursue. That alone is the goal, the final objective, to be attained. And that salvation becomes manifest as *Bhagavat prāpti*, attainment of God, and as consecrated service, *Bhagavat kaṁkarya*. The method, Sādhana, or the means, Upāya, or the instrument, prāpaka, which brings us to the end is variously understood by different people to be Karma (Works) or Jñāna (Knowledge) or Bhakti (Devotion). But God Himself is the means to attain Him; and so the gōpikas declare this faith in the opening Pāsuram itself by saying that *paṛai* only is what they want and Nārāyaṇa alone can give it. These two essential factors of their faith are made more clearly explicit in Pāsurams 28 and 29. They have made it explicit in the previous Pāsuram (No. 28) that Śrīkṣṇa alone is their means or instrument; and that they have nothing of their own—nothing which they have earned by way of good works or knowledge; and that all their merit lies in Kṣṇa for the unaccountable love with which he has taken birth in their community; and that their kinship with him is inseparable; and that as they are ever his own, Kṣṇa will protect them; and himself become the instrument of fulfilling their wish by bestowing on them the *paṛai* that they have sought. Now they elucidate the fruit that results from Kṣṇa becoming the instrument.

In the first Pāsuram, they define their final objective and then observe that it will be given by Nārāyaṇa Himself. Unless we have a strong relish for our objective, we do not care to think of a method to get at it. Now that they are on the point of realising

their objective, they hold fast to the instrument (Upāya) so as to secure their objective (Phala). So in Pāsuram 28 they say that Kṛṣṇa only is their means to it. In the opening Pāsuram they said that Nārāyaṇa would give the 'paṇai' to them only, because they only deserve it. Now they set forth the grounds on which they claim their fitness for it. The true nature of self is marked out by three qualities: 1. Ananya bhōgyatva, not having any desire to be enjoyed by any other than God; 2. Ananyōpāyatva, believing that God alone is the means of attaining Him and that there is no other means. 3. Ananyārhatva, having the conviction that the self deserves to belong to Him alone and to no other. The gōpikas have declared on several occasions that those alone who possess these three qualities are fit to attain Him; and that they are those persons. In Pāsurams 28 and 29 they assert once again in clear terms how they know the true nature of self, the means to adopt and the end to reach. They refer to themselves as 'pure' in Pāsurams 5 and 16; and the purity they have ascribed to themselves in those Pāsurams is 'purity of their means' (*Upāya pariśuddhi*) and 'purity of their final objective' (*phala pariśuddhi*). These two types of purity receive elaborate exposition in Pāsurams 28 and 29 respectively. The idea that good works (satkarma) or knowledge (jñāna) or devotion (bhakti) that they have to their credit can ever be deemed as means (Upāya) should be rooted out, together with its taste (ruchi) and residual tendency (vāsana), by those who accept God as the only means. They should not entertain the notion that accepting Him as instrument is a clever device to have their purpose fulfilled. If any such fancy clings to the mind, it stains their purity, in the same way as a mere touch of the corpse pollutes a person. To be free from such impurity in mind makes for the immaculateness of the means or instrument (*Upāya śuddhi*). The objective sought reaches fulfilment (*phala*), in attaining God and in doing Him service. To turn away from Him after reaching Him and securing some other benefit from Him, casts a stigma on the objective itself. Again, to consider consecrated service as something which gives satisfaction or pleasure to the self is again to cast a slur on the objective in another way. To experience God with these two taints makes the whole pursuit futile. In fact, the experience itself becomes vicious and is tantamount to eating left-over or poisoned food. The whole objective becomes polluted. Avoidance of these two lapses makes for

phala suddhi, the purity of the objective. The gōpikas have both these types of purity—purity of means and purity of end. In the previous pāsuram they have elucidated *upāyapariśuddhi* and now they expound the *phalapariśuddhi*.

When once an aspirant gives up all other means and clings to God as the only means of attaining Him, he develops a taste for Him; and this taste urges him to reach speedy realisation of his objective. After reaching God and while rendering Him service, a situation arises when, forgetting that reaching Him is the final end sought, an idea crops up to turn this objective into a means to a different end. And when this lapse is discovered, a conflict in the mind manifests itself in anguish. But the mind gets over its agony, recovers its poise and rejects everything else as unwarranted. There is a spurt in its efforts of realising Him only and rendering consecrated services to Him. The longing for the fulfilment of this sole objective becomes more earnest and intense. This Pāsuram shows all these stages, ending finally in purity of fulfilment (*Phalasuddhi*).

The gōpikas have renewed their resolve, in the previous pāsuram to confide in Kṛṣṇa as the only means to attaining him. This conviction they have had from the very outset. It is this conviction that has made them sleepless and urged them to move on to Kṛṣṇa without further loss of time. They go to him and sing him benediction. But agitated in mind by their infatuation, they speak as if they have some other objective and begin to explain the intention underlying their singing him benediction. They point to themselves as people in agony and expose their anguish. They tell him that they have come to him on the plea of observing a rite and have asked for the *paṇai* from him. But they confess that they are not really interested in it. They declare that the end they desire to attain is that they be privileged to render him consecrated service at all times and in all places and circumstances. People who have the conviction that God is the means and accept Him as such, do not seek any other objective than Him. If, however, they hanker after a different end, they are like those who buy husk in exchange for a gem. It is wrong for those who accept God as the proper means to adopt a different means. It is wrong to hanker after a different objective after aspiring for God as the end to attain. Gōḍāḍvi, the gōpika here, knows this long-standing

tradition. So long she has been speaking of the ritual and of the need for *paṛai*, an essential requisite for it; and now she clarifies beyond doubt that what she has been aspiring for is not the *paṛai*, but perennial consecrated service to the Lord.

The gōpikas have awakened Kṛṣṇa and requested him to come out into the audience-chamber and listen to the purport of their visit and favour them with what they need. Lord Kṛṣṇa has come out and considered their request in detail and agreed to provide them with all the requisites needed for the rite. Then they desire that he should do them honour after the completion of the rite. He accedes to this request also. When Kṛṣṇa is thinking that their business with him has come to an end, the gōpikas again assert that they have no other means and that he alone constitutes all the merit they have; and they repeat their request for *paṛai*. Then Kṛṣṇa suspects that the *paṛai* they have been asking for is not the usual percussion instrument of that name, but something different. He remains silent expecting that they will themselves tell him what it is. The gōpikas then feel: "Alas! He is unable to appreciate our anguish and our impatient longing. Though we have the firm conviction that he is our only means to attaining him, how is it we lack the poise to stand still in the hope that he will protect us?" It is their eagerness to taste spiritual experience that hastens them to make known their wish to Kṛṣṇa and request him to fulfil it. What they aspire for is perennial service to him; and they urge that he should grant its fulfilment.

*ṣiṭṭam ciṛukāle vandunnai cceṇittu, un
poṭṭā marai yaḍiyē pōṭṭum poruḷ keḷāy
peṭṭammēyttunṇuṇikuḷattil piṇṇandani
kuṭṭṭēvalēṇṇaḷai kkollāmal pōḡādu
iṭṭaiṇṇapaṇaiḷvān anṛugān; Gōvindā!
eṭṭaiṇṇumeḷeḷupira vikkum undannōḍu
uṭṭōmē yāvōmunakkē nāmāḷ ceyvōn
maṭṭai naṇḡamaṇḡaḷ mātṭē lōrempāvāy*

Summary.

Listen to the purpose behind our coming to you early before dawn and our serving you and singing benediction to your

memorable feet which are beautiful as golden lot^{us} flowers. Having been born in the community of gōpālas who first graze their cattle and then only take their food, you should not reject the personal services we render with all our hearts. We have not come merely to receive the *paṇai* from you and then depart. We should become united with you by an inseparable kinship for all time and through successive births and be rendering consecrated services to you alone for ever. We pray that you will forbid any other desires crossing our minds.

Commentary.

1. *ṣiṭṭam ciṟukālē vandu*

“Coming to you early before dawn.” The gōpikas, who are young girls in their teens, start early, unafraid of darkness and unhampered by the chill winds, and reach Kṛṣṇa’s house far in advance of dawn. Their eagerness to attain Kṛṣṇa makes them indifferent to all discomforts. Taste for God-experience leaves the aspirant no respite. Unless there is that urge of eagerness, it is not possible to attain that experience. That moment in life when the mind turns towards God is the Brahma muhūrta, the advent of dawn for the spirit. It is at that moment when the mind orients to God that the gōpikas come to meet Kṛṣṇa. That time when the darkness melts and light has yet to become bright—that period of twilight-transition—is described here as *ṣiṭṭam ciṟukālē*. The time when people, engrossed in pleasures of the senses in this life of bondage-to-birth, awaken from their inertia is called *Kālē*. The time when those, who regulate their lives by following the traditional practices prescribed for different stages in life and for different communities, wake up from sleep is called *ciṟu kālē*. The time when the gōpikas, who are unable to sleep because of their orientation towards God, rise from their beds is called *ṣiṭṭam ciṟu Kālē*. The time spent by the people seeking wealth and other material benefits from the Lord is called *Kālē*. The time spent by people in serving God to attain self-knowledge is called *ciṟukālē*. The time spent in serving God for His own sake and that too because refraining from such service becomes unendurable is called *ṣiṭṭam ciṟukālē*.

The twilight before dawn symbolises the period of transition when the darkness of ignorance, which has enveloped us from

times immemorial, melts slowly, yielding place to the light of bliss which results from attaining God and rendering consecrated service to Him. There is little darkness; but light has yet to take sway. Night is the time when worldly men who hanker after the sense-pleasures lose themselves in them and go to sleep. Dawn symbolises the awakening from sloth into a state of calm purity in which, through the spiritual instruction of an āchārya, reticence towards God is replaced by an interest in Him; and as taste for Him develops, an intense eagerness to attain Him becomes the dominating urge. The break of day signifies the culmination of this urge into attainment of God; and that is full daylight. The bath the gōpikas wish to have is this plunge into spiritual experience. The instruction of the preceptor points to a convenient place to take the plunge. That is why the gōpikas have sought Kṛṣṇa, enlisting on the way the good offices of Nandagōpa, Yaśōda and Nīlādēvi.

In Vrēpalle in which Kṛṣṇa has emerged, what is night for us is day; and what is day for us is night. Night has become day. Because the Changeless Sun (Kṛṣṇa) has taken rise on the eastern horizon (Dēvaki) at midnight.

Kṛṣṇa will not be available if the gōpikas do not turn up before the night wanes. Yaśōda will feed him with rice and curd while the day is breaking, hand him the lunch-basket fastened to a stick and send him to the woods to tend the cattle. He returns only at dusk, follows the cattle to the sheds of their owners and fastens them to the posts; then reaches home to the delight of his mother who bathes him and feeds him. He goes to rest; and after a time, steals away from home to the pleasant resorts to meet his favourites among gōpikas. No one knows when he returns home for rest after the midnight revels; but he is ready to enter upon his normal duties by dawn. Knowing that Kṛṣṇa will not be available at other times than at dawn, the gōpikas arrive at his home before the night wanes. Aspirants who have understood that their knowledge or devotion cannot be effective means and that God alone is the instrument to attain Him, and who have given up all self-effort, knowing that accepting Him as means should not itself be considered a clever device, still turn towards God, moved by their taste for Him and urged by anguish for union with Him. This is the time of daybreak; this the time of dawn, the Brahma-muhūrta, congenial to contemplation on God. It is at this time

that the gōpikas have come. Their coming at such a time causes as much worry to the Lord as that which is undergone by those who revolve on the wheel of Samsāra (without finding an escape) in turning towards God. It is possible for the Lord to turn the worldly people, who identify the body with the soul, towards Himself by incarnating amidst them and making a frontal approach or storming them from all sides. But it is, indeed, very difficult to make the gōpikas (who know that giving up all self-effort is the means to attain Him) adopt the pravṛtti mārga, a course of worldly activity, and lead them to Himself. The gōpikas are fully aware that they should not think that they are adopting a clever device in approaching him, because he alone is the effective means to get at him. They also know that they should not, by themselves, make any effort for attaining him. They know that they should not by themselves go to Kṛṣṇa; yet they have actually gone to him. And thereby they have caused great worry to Kṛṣṇa's mind.

When Vibhīṣaṇa goes to Śrī Rāma, and stands in mid-air and speaks to him praying for refuge, Śrī Rāma feels very miserable, "Alas! here is one who has reposed his faith in me as his refuge: I should have myself gone to him to protect him. Instead, by my neglect, I have waited till he comes to me. Besides, the moment I have seen him I should have walked towards him offering protection. Instead, I have waited till he makes the request. How hard-hearted I am!" Again, when Rāma goes into the woods in obedience to his father's wish and reaches Guha's village, Guha advances to welcome him. Then Rāma, unmindful of the long journey he has made, expresses his concern for the trouble taken by Guha in walking towards him to receive him. The gōpikas now feel worried that their going to Kṛṣṇa's place on foot will make Kṛṣṇa miserable. Normally, Kṛṣṇa should have come from Mathura to Vṛṇpalle and then to the street where the gōpikas lived, and thereafter he should have entered the courtyard and made his way into their houses and met them there. Now, is it not a serious blemish on them that they go all the way to Kṛṣṇa's house? True; it is wrong for those, who adopt other methods to reach God, to give up self-effort. But for those who cling to God as the only means, not renouncing self-effort is a veritable lapse. So the gōpikas admit their lapse when they declare that they have come to him before the darkness has waned.

2. *Unnaiccēvittu;*

‘ Then, serving you.’

“ Our coming to you itself is wrong. Serving you after coming here is another lapse. Undermining our true nature, we have come here. Forgetting your true nature we have served you. God’s nature is such that He cannot bear forsaking even the person who is not really friendly but who pretends friendship. Such being His generous nature, he feels miserable when people who seek refuge in Him take the trouble of going to Him. The gōpikas have accentuated Kṛṣṇa’s unhappiness by serving him after going to him.

It is unfortunate that though born as human beings, people hanker after things of little value; and in order to get at them wait on mean mortals expecting to receive their gracious looks; and patiently endure humiliating situations and insulting words. Instead, if they turn towards God and serve Him, they are sure to gain their desired objective because of their natural bond of kinship with Him. It is but proper for us to seek His favour because He is very considerate and good; He has a form that charms; He can be adored with ease and pleasure; He bestows His status on others Himself; He cannot give up any one who surrenders to Him. His graciousness is so great that He feels miserable if we walk a few steps towards Him. If we go on serving Him, we shall only be causing Him more misery. Knowing this fully well, the gōpikas have not only walked towards Kṛṣṇa but have also rendered him service; and they therefore feel guilty of causing him great disquiet by their actions.

3. *Un poṭṭāmarai yaḍiyē pōṭṭum;*

“We have sung benediction to your feet which resemble golden lotus flowers.”

Looking at the master’s feet and concentrating attention on them is a characteristic of a servant. The gōpikas do not expect any benefit out of their singing of benediction; nor do they seek protection as a reward for it. They believe that singing benediction to his feet is in itself the highest end. What they wish is that, even if they should perish, those auspicious feet of his should remain

safe. Those feet are both their means and end. Gold is a means to secure a different object; whereas Lotus is something to be enjoyed for itself. To the gōpikas the Lord's auspicious feet are, like gold, the means to their final objective; and like lotus, the very objective to attain. They have no need to assess their value for they seek no benefit out of them. *For them bliss lies in singing their benediction.*

4. *Poruḷ kēḷāy*

"Listen to its purpose."

After singing the benediction, the gōpikas explain what benefit could be got out of it. The gōpikas have turned up before Kṛṣṇa, their bodies exhausted and their eyes red with sleeplessness; and have begun talking to him. Kṛṣṇa stands still, preoccupied with looking at their bewitching eyes and ruby lips and tender feet with tingling anklets; and he drinks in their honeyed words with attentive ears. Seeing that Kṛṣṇa is lost in thought, the gōpikas alert him with the word "Listen." As the teacher proceeds with his lesson, he calls the attention of his disciples who are absent-minded by uttering the word 'listen.' Similarly, the gōpikas alert Kṛṣṇa with the words, "are you attentive? listen." Gōḍāḍēvi has awakened Kṛṣṇa, who has been sleeping on the sides of Nīlāḍēvi's elevated bosom, and begun her discourse on how the gōpikas are his possessions; and while on it, she alerts Kṛṣṇa with the caution, 'Listen.' "You have to listen, not for our sake, not for fulfilling our wish. We have not sung the benediction for our benefit; it is for your own good. We are only reminding you of your duty. We only elucidate what you should do, so that your true nature may not become damaged. And you should attend to this at once and not at your leisure."

5. *Peṭṭam mēy ttuṇṇunkuḷattil piṇanda nī :—*

"You who have been born in the community which makes a living on tending cattle, listen." "The benefit is not ours. It is yours. You should not make delay when the main purpose for which you have taken birth is on the point of being fulfilled. You have taken this birth and undergone all this trouble only to possess us as your own. You have created in us the taste and the urge

for you; and now will you not effect the final culmination of this process? We have come to you, Kṛṣṇa, because you have taken birth like us, in the gōpa community; and you have taken avidly to the life of tending cattle and earning your livelihood thereby. We have not come to the Lord of Vaikunṭha who allows only the blessed Ever-wise to have a glimpse of Him. We have not come to one like Śrī Rāma, who, though incarnating in this world as king, has had to submit to the control of Vaśiṣṭha who is particular of his observing traditional regulations." The gōpikas have not sought the protection of the Supreme Phenomenon (Paratattva) nor the Vyūha forms of the Divine, nor Incarnations like Rāma. They have sought refuge in Kṛṣṇa, who has chosen to come down as one of them and to lead a life, similar to theirs, of tending cattle; and has thus become familiar and easy of access. Gōdādevī has herself sought refuge in the Adorable Image of the Lord. The cows do not know how to protect others; nor do they know how to ask for protection from others. But Kṛṣṇa of his own accord, goes after them, giving them unsolicited protection. He does not take food until he has provided them with feed. The gōpikas ask him pathetically: "Should you not look after us? Should you not hasten to fulfil our aspiration?"

6. *Kuṭṛēval eṅgaḷai kkoḷḷāmal pṛgādu:*

"You must accept us for your private personal services."

When you happen to be in your Heavenly Abode you are the Unborn; and so you may accept the services of Garuḍa and Ananta who are themselves without 'birth.' But after taking birth in gōpa community, you must accept only the services rendered by the members born of that community. It is only for this purpose that you, the Unborn One, have taken birth in this place. The cattle are superior to us. They can roam about and earn their fill of feed. If they fail of it, people take pity on them and feed them. But we have sought you as our only means, and given up all effort of our own. We have given up all our casual relations and apparent kith and kin and adhered to you only; there is none else to take pity on us; you alone must rescue us from our miserable plight. You must therefore summon us and command us; and employ us in your private and personal services. We are not to be employed in services that take us away from you. We are not to be engaged

for service in a different place, however agreeable it may be to you. We pray that you will take us into personal services, such as bringing the bowl of consecrated food, holding the camphor flame before your person, handing the upper garment for wear; wafting the fly-whisk of chāmari hair, presenting the pān to chew, pressing the feet while resting etc., and make us happy by accepting them. We know the sweet relish of your service; and so we have hastened to you with unendurable anguish to render it. Look at us, how famished our bodies are in the agony of separation from you! Seeing us in this miserable plight, how can you avoid employing us in your service? You have taken us to a state in which food and drink no longer provide sustenance; in which life ceases if your beauty is hidden from view. How can you now abandon us? Your service alone is our nourishment, our sustenance. Having deprived us of other means of nourishment and sustenance, is it not obligatory for you to provide for us? You will be justified in neglecting us, if we have declined your service. But it is very unfair on your part to leave us in the lurch when we come to you, giving up everything else, with a strong determination to serve you. Now, you must admit us, of your own accord, into your service. Once you do this, you will not release us even if we so desire. Thereafter we need not have to pray that you will graciously accept our service.” Then Kṛṣṇa accedes to their request: “All right. I shall take you into personal service and assign duties as desired. You have asked for *paṛai* several times; you may now take it from me.”

7. *Iṣṭaipparaikoḷvān anṛugāṇ Gōvindā*

“O Gōvinda! now we are not prepared to take the *paṛai*.”

“True; so long we have been asking for *paṛai*; this we have done only to make our request correspond to the wish of the people here. What we ask for is not the *paṛai*. Women talk in a veiled, suggestive manner when they hint at their wishes to their lovers. Then it is not the literal meaning of their words that counts; it is what the words imply that matters; and that suggestion has to be understood. Could it be that you have imbibed the inherent quality of the cows you follow and tend? You have failed to grasp the suggestion behind our words. It is unfair on your part not to take us into your personal, private service. It is absolutely

wrong on our part now to give up and recede, falling back upon something different. The time has come for you to act in justification of the title 'Gōvindā,' which you have earned by offering protection to the cows with all your will

In the two previous Pāśurams (27 and 28) the gōpikas have referred to Kṛṣṇa by the appellation, 'Gōvindā'; here, too, they invoke the same title again. On the first occasion, they have called him 'Gōvindā' in order to express their gratitude that he has drawn them to himself; and that he has turned their hostility to friendship by manifesting his attributes and by favouring them with the privilege of getting united with him: "*Kūḍārai vellum śīr Gōvindā.*"

Then declaring that they have no other means, they admit that he is perfect and complete and competent to supply their deficiency in knowledge; and become their only means in attaining their cherished objective: "*Kuraivonṟu millāda Gōvindā.*" And, lastly, they now submit that they have no other objective than himself: "*iṟṟaipparai koḷvānanṟugān Gōvindā.*" Your occupation of tending the cows and giving them protection has made you forget your true nature and ours, our objective and your birth." And so they seem to taunt him as "the Gōvinda who has taken birth in the community of those who make a living by tending cattle." The gōpikas have made this so explicit for fear that Kṛṣṇa, moved by his innate sense of mischief, might think of the other meanings of 'Gōvinda' and remain indifferent that this appellation does not relate to him.

"Gōḥ" means 'earth.' In his incarnation as Varāha, a white Boar, he has raised the Earth, releasing it from a demon's grip. So 'Gōvinda' might well refer to it. Again, 'Gōvinda' may also refer to the incarnation of Vāmana, when he has acquired the whole earth as a gift from Bali. 'Gōḥ' also means 'śabda' or word. So 'Gōvinda' may refer to his incarnation as 'swan' (Hamsa) in which he has lifted up the śabdarāśi, pile of words; or to his incarnation as 'Hayagrīva' in which he has disclosed the greatness of the word-pile. 'Gōḥ' also means 'rays of light.' 'Gōvinda' thus may be understood as referring to Śrīmannārāyaṇa who shines as the Effulgent Being immanent in the sphere of the sun. Fearing that Kṛṣṇa might remain indifferent, taking the

word 'Gōvinda' to mean some other person, the gōpikas, who cannot bear separation from him, give up secrecy; and openly declare that by 'Gōvinda' they mean that one, who has taken birth in the community that makes a living of tending cattle: *Peṣṣam mēyrtuṇṇuṅkuḷattil piṇḍani Gōvindā*. Then Kṛṣṇa observes: "I have understood your words in the same way and to the same extent as other people understand. I am not wanting in intelligence. You have troubled me by not speaking plainly and clearly. Let it alone. You have said that you will render personal services. Clarify what you mean by personal services." The gōpikas then come out with a clear enunciation of their earnest longing, of the end they have aspired for. This longing has been so far expressed as the *paṇai*, as the Mārga Śīrṣa Bath and such other veiled words. Now comes an unequivocal declaration; as, in its absence, the Lord is not likely to accede to their request.

8. *Eṣṭraikkumēḷēḷu piṇavikkum undannoḍu*
uṣṭrōmē yāvōm unakkē nāmāḷ ceyvōm.

"We should have an inseparable kinship with you for all time and through successive births; and we be rendering service to you only, for ever."

"We should be with you; not merely today; not even for a time equivalent to the period of our separation from you; but for all time—Be it the period, unaffected by time, when your eternal grandeur manifests itself in limitless bliss; or be it the time when, for the benefit of your supplicants, you descend into the world in manifold forms—we should always abide with you. Whether you are in Paramapada, Heavenly Abode, as the Unborn, or in this world taking birth as an incarnation, the Divine Mother never leaves you but clings to you. So shall we be with you, inseparable. During the incarnation of Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa follows Rāma as a shadow, wherever Rāma is—whether in the capital of the kingdom or at large in the woods. We should, likewise, stick to you at all times and places. We are not particular about your form, your weapons or your ornaments. We want you only. We do not mind how you are accoutred—with conch, disc and mace as in Śrī Vaikuṇṭha or with reed-pipe (flute) and sling as here with us. We should, if you are in the Heavenly Abode, be the bearers of your disc and conch and bow and other weapons; and if you be here, again, we should carry your sling, spear and pipe

and keep them ready for your use whenever required. Whether you are in the state of inaccessible supremacy or in that of easy accessibility, we should remain united with you in both situations. We should have *all types* of relationships with *you only*." The gōpikas are apprehensive of specifying any one kinship with him, lest they should be denied the relationship that has not been particularly mentioned by them; and so they desire that they should have all types of relationship with him. Let us look at some of the relationships they have in mind:

"We should like to have with you that kind of relationship that Daśaratha had with Rāma, a relationship that did not allow him to breathe the moment he separated from Rāma and cost him his life. Our lives should ebb out the moment we leave you. Again, we wish to have with you the same close kinship as those women of Vraja had with you, when they felt the agony of separation from you while you grew up in a place away from them. We should be pleased to have with you the same kinship that mother Yaśōda had, when, seeing you eat butter and other favourite dishes in excess, she felt greatly distressed about their possible ill-effects on your health. We should feel towards you as Lakṣmaṇa felt towards Rāma. Had Rāma forbidden Lakṣmaṇa's accompanying him, Lakṣmaṇa would have died instantaneously, as fish cast out of water. (So would the gōpikas, if Kṛṣṇa should forbid their company). We wish to have such close attachment to you as that which had shocked people, who loved you, to unconsciousness, when they but heard of your fall into the mouth of Kālīya. We want such loving intimacy with you that will move you to condone all our lapses. We want you to have such complete uninhibited familiarity with us as will induce you to come to our houses, even if uninvited; and taking a seat, to do us favours with gracious goodwill. We wish to have such relationship with you as will readily make you accessible to us whenever we wish to join you, even after remaining aloof from you for some time. There is no end to this list of relationships! We wish to forge kinship with you in ever so many directions—with you as mother, father, brother, home, refuge or succour, friend, destination or supreme objective: *Māta, pitāḥ, bhrātā, nivāsaḥ, śaraṇam, suhṛt, gatīḥ, Nārāyaṇaḥ*). Or as Lakṣmaṇa has put it: Rāma is his brother, lord, relation, father: *Bhrātā, bhartācha, bandhuṣcha,*

pitācha mama Rāghavaḥ. The gōpikas wish to have all these kinds of kinship. Not only that. They go further: "Even though there is that close relationship, we should not have the misfortune of being kept away like Sīta for ten months. We should not be subjected to separation for 14 years or 16 years. Not only should our close kinship continue unabated and without break, but also should we derive the full benefit of it by rendering perennial services to you. Our services should be to you, who have made known to us our relationship with you; to you, who are desirous of receiving our services. We should be eager to render services to one like you, who has come into this world on purpose to receive them. We should serve *you* only; at the same time, we should not think that *we* are serving you; rather, it is *you* who should, for your own sake, make us your instruments for the services you need. These services should not be aimed at pleasing both us and you; no, they should be meant to please *you only*. You should not assign to us some duties because we have asked for them. You should, of your own accord, command us to do such duties as are agreeable to you." Knowing that Śrīkṛṣṇa is the Supreme Being, the gōpikas who are conscious of their birth in the gōpa community, which is well-known for its gross ignorance, offer to become his humble servants and undertake to discharge the lowliest of all duties. Their objective being his service, and they being instinct with life and consciousness, the gōpikas feel that they cannot exist without attaining it.

9. *Maṭṭrai naṅgāmaṅgaḷ māttu ē.ḍrempāvāy:*

"Dispel all other desires that may crop up in our minds." "Let not such desires as living in Vaikunṭha along with the blessed Ever-wise cross our minds. We would like to have only this kinship; that you call us 'dear girls', and we call you 'Kṛṣṇa'. We should always have this one steady thought that you are our goal, our support and our refuge. Our minds should not stray over Vaikunṭha and similar other resorts. By becoming an enjoyable obsession, your beauty should not raise an obstacle to our rendering consecrated service. Again, when we are with you rendering services, we should never think that you and we are equal sharers in the joy derived from them. No, we should always remember that our services are meant to give joy to you only; and our happiness

consists in seeing that you are pleased with our services. The idea of 'mine' or "for my sake" should never vitiate consecrated service."

Such ideas of possessiveness (*madiyatva buddhi*) or enjoyableness (*bhokṭṛiva buddhi*) pollute the experience of bliss, in the same way as a worm falling into food makes it uneatable. Therefore, while rendering service, the idea that God is getting it done for Himself should constantly prevail. The *gōpikas* pray to Kṛṣṇa that he should grant them the privilege of rendering him all types of service, unsullied by desires of any other kind. Thus in this Pāṣuram and the preceding one, they strongly reject four types of enemies: enemy to the means adopted (*upāya virōdhi*), enemy to the nature of the self (*swarūpa virōdhi*), enemy to the attainment of the objective (*prāpti virōdhi*), and enemy to the objective aspired for (*prāpya virōdhi*).

By stating that they have no other means like knowledge, or works or devotion, the *gōpikas* have eliminated those which would have stood as obstacles to their determination to accept God as the means to attain Him. By admitting lapses and praying for pardon, sins which could have obstructed progress towards attainment of the goal have been done away with. By declaring in this Pāṣuram that they have renounced all attachment to external objects and have cultivated taste for him, which, in its turn, has caused them anguish and urged them to rush to him for succour, the *gōpikas* have shown that they are rid of all elements which are hostile to the true nature of self. Now that they pray that they should not be deflected from his service by any other desires and that they should be free from the thoughts that they are enjoying spiritual experience and that that experience is *theirs*, it is clear that all hostile elements to the goal are eliminated. The *gōpikas* thus elucidate that the fruit of their rite, the highest end they have been aspiring for, is to render freely, without any obstacle or break, perennial service to God, at all times and in all places and circumstances; and while rendering this consecrated service, they are absorbed in the thought that God is getting this service done by them for His own purpose.

This pāṣuram also elucidates the meaning of the *Aṣṭākṣari mantra* (the eight-letter incantation). By saying, "To you, Gōvindā", that is, "to the Supreme Lord, the Creator and Protector of the

world", the meaning of Akāra is signified. By saying to you alone (*nīkē*) the meaning of ekāra which is the same as symbolised by Ukāra in the Praṇavam (Ōmkāra) is brought out. Ukāra implies that the self belongs only to the Supreme Self, and not to itself nor to any one else. By saying "We", Makāra in the Praṇavam is indicated, meaning the species of sentient beings. Thus the meaning of Praṇavam is brought out.

By saying, "We have every type of relationship with you", the meaning involved in the word 'Nārāyaṇa' is brought out: namely, the bond of inseparable kinship that exists between all objects and the Supreme Self.

By saying, "For all time, through successive births", the prayer implicit in 'Āya' is indicated. They desire that all activities—mental, vocal or physical—at all times and in all places and circumstances should belong to Him. Thus they point out that the purpose of the rite they perform is the same as that propounded by that fundamental incantation, the root and the sovereign of all mantras, the *Aṣṭākṣari mantra*.

To sum up: As soon as "Sattvaguṇa " the tendency to purity sprouts in an individual's life which is enveloped in the darkness of ignorance, the self should turn towards God and move towards His presence. Reaching Him, he should serve Him. He should enjoy the entrancing beauty of His form. To enrich this experience he should sing benediction upon Him. Efforts should be made to please God so that He might turn towards him. The aspirant must make a submission that it is for the sake of people like him that God has incarnated in this world. He should make known his anguish for God, He should make it clear that he seeks no interest, no benefit, no attachment, other than the Lord. He must aspire only for perennial consecrated service. He should pray that God Himself should eliminate the obstacles that will crop up in the attainment of the highest end and in the understanding of the true nature of self and of the effective means of realising the objective, namely, the Supreme Self. The principal purpose of this ritual, as also of life, is to be in the ever-enchancing presence of the Lord. The gōpikas have made a clear enunciation of what their intentions are in undertaking the rite and how they have fulfilled them, so as to enable us to find a way of salvation for ourselves.

PĀŚURAM XXX

PREFACE

Following the example of the gōpikas, Gōdādēvi performs the rite and realises the fruit thereof. In the same way as the gōpikas attain union with Kṛṣṇa, Gōdādēvi succeeds in having Śrī Ranganātha, whom she loves dearly, for her husband, Śrī Ranganātha commands His votaries, who are very intimately devoted to Him, to proceed to Srivilliputtūr by the time the rite comes to a close and fetch Śrī Āṇḍāl to His presence. Śrī Bhattanātha reverently responds by escorting Śrī Āṇḍāl along with his disciple, Śrī Vallabharāya, to Śrīrangam. Śrī Ranganātha receives Śrī Āṇḍāl into Himself in the presence of all devotees. This day on which Śrī Ranganātha and Gōdādēvi are united in holy wedlock has come to be known as Bhōgi. This is the day on which Gōdādēvi finds herself absorbed in soul-deep God-experience; and so it is appropriately called Bhōgi.

This ritual which Gōdādēvi has performed gives her the same benefit that it has earlier given to the gōpikas. This rite can be performed by all people; and it fulfils all aspirations. Gōdādēvi exhorts that people who cannot perform this rite can, if they devoutly recite these thirty, regularly Pāsurams achieve the same result that the performance of it gives. Constant recitation of these Pāsurams effects liberation from bondage to non-self; it procures material prosperity as well. It is hoped that all the people will perform this simple rite and recite these hymns and gain salvation.

Gōdādēvi turns into a gōpika when she performs this Vrata; and the result attained is union with God. The effort that the Lord has made to secure Lakṣmī for wife may be seen in the enormous trouble He has undergone during the churning of the Ocean of Milk. The efforts that the Lord makes to claim us as His own excel, by far, our attempts to reach Him, as is evidenced in the episode of the churning of the Ocean of Milk. So in this Pāsuram, the gōpikas sing of the glory of that episode. In the same way as Viṣṇu has borne the brunt of the churning of the ocean

of milk in order that He may secure Lakṣmi for wife, the Lord will make efforts, on his own initiative, to receive into Himself those who reverently recite the thirty Pāsurams regularly. This Pāsuram deals with the closing part, the fulfilment, of this Vrata of spiritual aspiration.

In the opening Pāsuram, the gōpikas glorify the time that is suitable for the Vrata, the people who are qualified to undertake it, and ŚrīKṛṣṇa the person who can bring it to fruition; and then they determine to launch it. The second pāsuram makes out the list of things that are prescribed to be done and of those that are forbidden. In the third Pāsuram, the gōpikas pray for rain and for abundance of harvests and increase in cattle-wealth, so as to bring happiness and contentment to the elders who have permitted them to perform the rite. The fourth Pāsuram is devoted to the invocation of the deity presiding over rain and to prescribing the course that he has to pursue, so as to fill the world with showers that form the source of all material prosperity. The fifth Pāsuram declares that the moment they sing glorifying God's name, sins that stand as obstacles to the performance of the rite perish, of their own accord. And now they launch upon the Vrata. Pāsurams Six to Fifteen are taken up with arousing ten gōpikas and enlisting their company and participation; and these ten represent devotees in several stages of development, ranging from the novice who has just given up hostile attitude and is initiated into spiritual experience to the accomplished devotee to whom it is death to be cut off from the company of saintly persons. In the Sixteenth pāsuram the keeper of Nanda's mansion and the guard at the entrance are approached for admission into the house. Nandagōpa, Yaśōda, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma have all been awakened in the Seventeenth Pāsuram. The Eighteenth is devoted to pleading with Nīlādēvi to open the door of the bedchamber. The succeeding four Pāsurams (19 to 22) are occupied with a description of Nīlādēvi's beauty and tenderness, of the glory of her love and the bliss it brings her and of her function as influencing mediator. They include the plea of the gōpikas for her sympathy and support. Later the gōpikas mention details about ŚrīKṛṣṇa's birth and attributes and seek refuge in him as the only means available to them; then they give up all attachment and pride and declare that his gracious looks alone are their support and sustenance. In

the Twenty-third Pāsuram they implore Kṛṣṇa to come out, in the same way as the lion just awakened from sleep emerges from his den, and be seated on the throne; and then consider their supplication. In the next Pāsuram they sing him benediction. In the Twenty-fifth Pāsuram they disclose their knowledge of the secret of his incarnation and tell him specifically that they have come to him to seek a favour. The Twenty-sixth Pāsuram gives a list of the requisites needed for the ritual. The next Pāsuram elucidates the honour that the gōpikas expect to receive from Kṛṣṇa at the close of the rite. The gōpikas declare, in the Twenty eighth Pāsuram, how disparate are the Lord's exceeding greatness and their own extreme lowliness, they show at the same time their awareness of their mutual kinship and ask for pardon of their lapses. They pray for fulfilment of their longing as he alone is the means they have adopted to realise their wish of union with him. The Twenty-ninth Pāsuram clarifies that the percussion instrument *paṇai*, which they have all along been asking for, is not the real thing they wish to have. There is some thing else beyond it; and what exactly it is finds clear elucidation here. In this Pāsuram, the Thirtieth and the last, they assure those, who do not have the bond of perfect unison in spirit with Him as the gōpikas and Gōḍāḍēvi had but who are in the habit of reciting the thirty Pāsurams devoutly and regularly, that they are sure to become recipients of the same benefits that the gōpikas and Gōḍāḍēvi have received by their penance.

*Vaṅgakkāḍal kaḍainda māḍavanaikkēṣavanait
tiṅgaḷ tirumugattu ccēyiḷai yārṣenṇiraṇci
aṅgappaṛai koṇḍa vāṭṭai, yaṇipuduvai
paṅgamalattāṇḍeriyal paṭṭar pirāṅkōḍaiṣonna
ṣaṅgattamiḷ māḷaimuppadam tappāme
iṅgippari śuraippār iriraṇḍu māḷvaraittōḷ
ṣeṅgaṇ tirumugattu ccelvattirumālāl
eṅgumtiuvāruḷ peṭṭrimpuruvarempāvāy.*

Summary.

The gōpikas of Vrēpalle, their faces radiant as the moon and their bodies adorned with strange ornaments, gather together and approach the Lord who, after manoeuvring the churning

of the ocean of milk which is filled with ships, has secured Lakṣmi for his wife and thus become Mādhava. This Lord has showered benefits even on Brahma and Rudra and thus become their benefactor. Singing Him benediction, the gōpikas obtain for the world the rain-giving *paṛai* and secure for themselves the privilege of eternal service to Him. Śrī Bhattanātha, who always wears a rosary made of lotus-beads, belongs to Srivilliputtūr, which is deemed to be the jewel of the world. It is his daughter, Gōḍādēvi, who presents the whole process of the soul's attainment of the Lord in this garland of Thirty Pāsurams in Tamil language. Whosoever recites, systematically and regularly, these Thirty Pāsurams is sure to obtain the same benefit that the gōpikas have received from Kṛṣṇa and that Gōḍādēvi has received from Śrī Ranganātha by performing the rite. The lotus-eyed Śrīmannārāyaṇa, the Lord of Lakṣmi, radiant with his majestic head and four mighty arms resembling mountain-summits, will graciously bestow on those who merely recite these Pāsurams systematically and regularly, exhilarating bliss at all times and in all places, now and for ever.

Commentary.

1. *Vaṅgakkāḍai kaḍaiṇda Māḍavanaikkēṣavanu*

“Mādhava, Kēṣava, who churned the ocean of milk filled with ships”—

The Lord manoeuvres the churning of the Ocean of Milk on the pretext that the immortals want nectar; and in the process accomplishes His wish by acquiring Lakṣmi for Himself. Likewise, on the plea that the gōpa elders desire the performance of the rite, Kṛṣṇa manages to get possession of the gōpikas. Seeing that Kṛṣṇa is in a transport of joy, the gōpikas recollect the episode of the churning of the ocean of milk.

Subjecting Himself to all the pressure and friction of a mountain and its whirl, the Lord brings to fruition the project of the celestials who aspire for nectar, an objective *other than Himself*. And this He does out of sheer love for them. This episode is recalled here by the gōpikas in order to indicate that such a loving Lord will certainly fulfil their longing, particularly when that longing is *for Him only* and for no other objective. He has made a deliberate effort then for others. But it has reached its culmination in the

attainment of His objective Lakṣmi. Now he feels that the fulfilment of the objective of the gōpikas in reaching him is a benefit to himself; thereby indicating that he, too, has made an effort towards the same end. Again, while the churning of the ocean of milk goes on, He has taken care to see that no damage is caused to the ships floating on it. This shows the Lord's skill. Could there be ships on the ocean of milk? Maybe, there are. Or, it may be that Śrī Mahāviṣṇu who rests on it is considered as the ship that takes people to the shore. To save people who solicit Him as the means to reach salvation, Mādhava Himself puts forth efforts, churns the sea of Samsāra, this life of bondage-to-birth, and manages to see that their souls attain Him. The gōpikas cling to Mādhava, even because of their firm belief that He alone is to be approached and no other, because of His eternal, intimate attachment to Lakṣmī who, by her intercession, sees to it that He is unmindful of their lapses and shortcomings.

Owing to the swing during the churning of the ocean, the Lord's locks of hair have fallen as a cascade about his face. Recalling the beauty of his hair, the gōpikas seek the grace of Kēśava. They have another reason for doing so because Kēśava has done to death Kēśi who has stood as an obstacle between them and God. Further, as He is the benefactor of both Brahma and Īśvara, Kēśava is considered to be the Supreme Lord and so they seek Him.

The meaning of the first part of *Dwayamantra* is suggested here in the reference to Mādhava and Kēśava. By Mādhava, the meaning of "Śrīmat" is suggested. By saying "churning the ocean," the greatness of the Lord's love of supplicants is shown. Though the celestials have committed a grave crime in leaving the precious God out and seeking the worthless nectar, God has graciously overlooked it in the abundance of His love and fulfilled their wish. The episode of the churning of the ocean brings out the Lord's glorious attributes, such as his absolute sovereignty, easy accessibility, gracious goodness, unlimited knowledge and power. The auspicious qualities, in all their multitude, suggested by the word "Nārāyaṇa" are all displayed in this episode; and thus the meaning of "Nārāyaṇa" is elucidated here. By uttering 'Kēśava' they have brought into prominence the beauty of his locks of hair, and thereby the charm of his magnificent figure. By saying that the gōpikas have gone close to him and served him,

the meaning of *charaṇou* is indicated: “*Śrīmannārāyaṇa charaṇou*.” Thus the meaning of the first part of *Dwayamantra* is elucidated here. The episode indicates the effort made by the Supreme to get at the individual self.

The body which the individual self assumes is the boat. There are several such boats on the ocean of Samsāra, this life of bondage to birth-and-death. The body is the boat, which is given to the self as the means to cross this ocean of bondage to non-self. The great Lord places the Mandara of His will (*sankalpa*) in the ocean of Samsāra, binds it with the cord of His mercy and churns it with the hands of His graciousness—all the while taking care to see that the boat of the body is not damaged. By this churning, the individual self obtains knowledge of the true nature of the Supreme Self. On account of this, the self becomes dear to the Supreme and reaches Him. In the same way as He has endeavoured to possess Lakṣmi, He takes pains to impart knowledge to the individual selves and sees that, with His mercy, they attain Him, while they are still in tact with bodies and are struggling on the ocean of bondage. Again, in the same way as he has killed Kēśi, the Supreme Lord Himself destroys the arch-enemy Ego, who always obstructs the self from reaching God in ever so many forms of *Ahaṁkāra* (the sense of ‘I and ‘mine’) in doing, knowing and enjoying. Mindful thus of the great favour done by Him in their attaining God, the *gōpikas* solicit the favour of “Mādhava” and “Kēśava”, who have churned “the ocean filled with floating ships”. They have begun the rite in the second *Pāsuram* with the glorification of the Supreme as He lies on the ocean of milk; and now they complete the ritual with taking refuge in the Supreme who has churned the ocean and become the Lord of Lakṣmi. They launch upon the ritual after singing to the glory of the feet of the Supreme Person (*Parama Puruṣu Pādamunu pāḍi*) and bring it to culmination with seeking refuge in Kēśava; thus the *gōpikas* have enjoyed the experience of the Lord’s contact from the feet below to the locks of hair above.

2. *Tiṅgaḷ tirumugattu cēṇṇāḷayār ṣēṇṇu iṇaiñci:—*

“Thir faces radiant like the moon, the *gōpikas*, adorned with divine ornaments, assemble before Kṛṣṇa and render services to him.” In the first few words of the *Pāsuram*, they extol the

excellence of Kṛṣṇa in whom they find refuge. Now they indicate the speciality which they, who seek him, possess. By their contact with Kṛṣṇa, the anguish in their hearts has cooled down and their faces have become radiant; in fact, they now resemble the moon in their pleasing gentleness. Kṛṣṇa's face appears a dazzling sun to his opponents and a pleasing moon to his admirers. But the complexions of the gōpikas cause happiness even to opponents. By gazing on Śrī Kṛṣṇa's face which resembles the full moon with all the phases in perfect bloom, the faces of the gōpikas have become equally radiant; because of the impact of his looks on them. A similar glow of gentle serenity spreads over the faces of sages who know God. On seeing the Embodiment of Bliss, the hearts of the gōpikas are filled with bliss; and that bliss spreads and glistens on their faces. Decked in the ornaments obtained from Kṛṣṇa as marks of honour, the gōpikas present a brilliant show, the brightness of the ornaments enhancing their natural comeliness. As a consequence of the attainment of God, the liberated soul shines with natural endowments purged of all impurities; and when he is adorned with the ornaments conferred on him by Brāhmā, his splendour becomes still further accentuated. Having cultivated a taste for Kṛṣṇa, the gōpikas are unable to resist the urge for his contact; and giving up further waiting they hasten to him. Approaching him and glimpsing his bewitching divine form, they are unable to restrain themselves from singing him benediction.

3. *Aṅgu aparai koṇḍavāṭṭrai,*

"There they have obtained that *parai*".

By 'there' is meant 'in Vrēpalle'. In the mansion of Nandagōpa, in the chambers of Nīlādēvi, in the council-hall, they have obtained the *parai* required for the benefit of their people; they have also secured the other *parai* that they have aspired for, namely, eternal union with him with the privilege of rendering consecrated service to him. Gōḍādēvi has expounded for our benefit the procedure adopted by the gōpikas for accomplishing their objective. Declaring with humility that they have nothing of spiritual endeavour (by way of works, or knowledge, or devotion) to their credit, they have prominently displayed the fulness and perfection of Śrīkṛṣṇa. They have elucidated the basis of their connecting bond with him to establish their claim to receive their desired objective from him.

They frankly confess their lapses and shortcomings and implore his pardon. Having developed a taste for him and unable to resist the urge of their longing for him, they have themselves hastened to him to solicit his succour. They accept the fruit of their endeavours, when he himself gives it; and that too when he gives it as though it is for his own sake. This process or procedure must necessarily be understood by all those who desire the attainment of God. The procedure laid down by Gōḍādēvi in Tiruppāvai is the same that the gōpikas have adopted to win the favour of Kṛṣṇa and have their longing fulfilled.

4. *aṇi puduvai paṅgamalattāṅ ḍeriyal paṭṭar pirān kōḍai*

“Gōḍādēvi of Śrī Bhattanātha, who is the wearer of the memorable rosary of lotus-beads and the resident of Śrīvilliputtūr which is the jewel of the world.”

The special excellence of Gōḍādēvi is here eulogised. Before that, they make mention of Śrīvilliputtūr. Śrīkṛṣṇa is specially fond of his relationship with Nandagōpa. Gōḍādēvi is equally fond of her kinship with Śrī Bhattanātha; and she takes special pleasure in glorifying it. Vrēpalle has earned distinction by being the place of Nanda's residence. Śrīvilliputtūr has acquired greatness by its association with Śrī Bhattanātha. Śrīvilliputtūr is a jewel to the entire mundane world. Mithila is the place of Sīta's nativity; and Ayōdhya the place where she has set foot as wife. Kumbhakula is where Nīla is born; but Nandavraja is the home of her husband. But to Gōḍādēvi the place of her birth is also the home of her lord; and it is Śrīvilliputtūr that has that special distinction. This place is like an ornament of gold in which are studded pearls and gems. Some places are noted for their association with God; and some others are famous for their connection with great saints. Some there are, who are known for their connection with the Divine mother, Lakṣmi. But Śrīvilliputtūr has a unique honour among all places. The place is presided over by the Deity Vāṭa-patrālāyi, *Vaṭaperuṅḍōyiluḍai yān*; it is honoured by the presence of the great saint and devotee *Periāḷwār* or Viṣṇuchitta; and it is sanctified by the descent of Lakṣmi in the person of Āṇḍāl. This superb combination makes the place the jewel of the entire world. In this thrice-holy place lived the greatest of the Brahmins, Bhattanātha or *Peri-Āḷwār*. He used to wear always, around his neck,

a rosary of cool lotus-beads. The garland of Tulasi (of Sacred Basil leaves) worn by the Lord may perhaps fade out at some time; but the rosary of lotus-beads worn by Śrī Bhattar never loses its freshness. As God's nature is such as to keep His devotees aloof now and then, the garland of sacred basil leaves worn by Him near His heart may, on such occasions, shrivel up. But as God is never forsaken by the hearts of His devotees, the garland of Śrī Bhattar remains ever cool and fresh. Of all the Lotus flowers, the first was the one which emerged from the navel of Śrīmannārāyaṇa with Brahma in its fold. The seed of that Lotus, verily is Śrīmannārāyaṇa Himself. To wear the garland of Lotus-seeds near the heart signifies holding Śrīmannārāyaṇa for ever in the heart. Śrī Bhattar who has worn such a garland is *pirān*, a benefactor. While the Brāhmins toil hard to study the Vēdas and learn their gist, Śrī Bhattar has brought within the reach of all, their essential meaning. He is a benefactor as he has gifted wisdom to scholars. He is a glorious person who has made over his daughter to the Supreme Puruṣa, whom the Vēdas propound. That is why Gōḍāḍēvi values highly her relationship with her father, Śrī Bhattar. In the same way as Vyāsa feels that his connection with his father Parāśara is what makes him great, Gōḍāḍēvi feels that to be *Paṣṭar pirān kṇḍai*, the daughter of Bhattanātha, is an honour great in itself.

5. *ṣonna ṣaṅgattamiḥ mālai:*

"A garland of words in Tamil presented (by Gōḍāḍēvi) in the company (of kindred souls)." Following the example of the gōpikas, Āṇḍāl performs the Vrata and expresses in words what she experiences in the course of it. Being a woman, she could, by her very nature, enjoy the intensity of love that the gōpikas have felt. She could elucidate clearly the intricate subjects and the most abstruse secrets propounded by Vēdānta, in a manner that has brought them within the reach of all and sundry. The waters of the sea become universally beneficial and life-giving, when the cloud releases them as showers. Likewise, the abstruse secrets of the Upaniṣads have, in her words, become simple and intelligible and come to be universally understood and enjoyed. In the same way as the glory of the incarnated Kṛṣṇa has become more impressive than that of the Lord of the Ocean of Milk, this

Tiruppāvai which has come out of Gōdādēvi has gained greater grandeur than the original Vēdas themselves. Tiruppāvai is a hymn sung by Āṇḍāl in company with five lakhs of gōpikas. It is not a song that has sprouted forth from any one individual and in isolation. That is why even today Tiruppāvai is a composition that is to be sung and enjoyed by people, assembling together in groups. It may be that any other composition might fail to attract the attention of people; but when Tiruppāvai is the composition to be dwelt upon, people gather in large numbers by themselves. Such is its compelling attraction and appeal. The Supreme Self who is beyond the reach of any one, of even the mind, has taken birth in a community that earns a living by tending cattle. Gōdādēvi, who is born in the highest caste (Brāhmins) has adopted the ways of gōpikas and identified herself with them. Likewise, the inaccessible truths and secrets held and propounded by the Vēdas have emerged in an easily intelligible form in the Tamil language. This garland of devotional aphorisms (*sūkti-mālīka*) in Tamil that has found expression in Gōdādēvi has both purifying and pleasing qualities. This garland is worthy of being worn on the head; it is verily a crown-gem, *śirōbhūṣaṇa*. Gōdādēvi is named *Kōḍai*, which means 'a garland.' Here is a garland, a garland of spiritual, devotional secrets, composed by the 'garland Āṇḍāl' who has bound the Lord with this garland; and having done so, she has taught Śrīkṛṣṇa a lesson, too.

6. *muppadam tappāmē*

"Thirty Pāsurams without any deviation in their order." This composition is neither very short like Pallāṇḍu nor very long like Tiruvāymoḷi. In Thirty Pāsurams all the essential spiritual truths that need to be known are presented in a condensed form. Tiruppāvai is a necklace in which thirty precious gems are strung together. The necklace appears incomplete even if one of the gems is missing. What the aspirants who long for attaining God will have to do is detailed in these thirty Pāsurams. They must take note of the time when the mind shows an orientation towards God and feel happy. They must know what things are to be accepted as useful and what to avoid. They should consider the prosperity of others as a benefit to themselves. They should know that sages can command even the celestial deities. By their perennial

practice of singing and glorifying the names of the Lord, they will have to assure themselves that, by the time they approach God, the pile of their sins is completely wiped out. They must establish close links of contact with all spiritual aspirants: with novices who have just tasted spiritual experience; with people who have some experience to their credit but have still some lapses; with devotees who are principally occupied with praising God; with people who are not completely free from the touch of things that are to be given up; with saints who are perennially engrossed in spiritual experience; with those who are in constant touch with other devotees; with those who are connected with people who abide in consecrated service; with sages who revelling in true wisdom have given up all activity; with sensitive devotees who feel apprehensive every moment about the safety of the Lord; and with those who surrender themselves to saints and depend entirely on them. Such a comprehensive approach contributes to catholicity of spirit, deepens the aspiration and hastens its fulfilment.

Spiritual aspirants should also be aware of the gradual stages by which they should reach God's presence. They should have intimate knowledge of the true nature and complexion of the mediators. They should ever be fond of the attributes of God. Realising that it is the Lord's graciousness that sustains them, they should rid themselves of all pride and attachment. They should pray that they should ever remain oriented towards God and should always be pronouncing benediction on Him. They should make a submission before Him of what they need and beg for His favour. Both at the stage when the desire for liberation is strong and in the stage succeeding liberation, the aspirants should pray that they be provided with the requisites and the sweet dish of enjoyment. They should openly avow that they have no other means of their own to attain them. They should declare their eager longing for eternal union with Him and for perennial consecrated service to Him. They should have great regard for the words of people who have reached these stages and should be happy to adopt their way of speaking. The profound meanings of the thirty Pāsurams, as elucidated above, have to be clearly borne in mind; and none of them should be missed. Then only it will be possible to have a perfect and complete God-realisation.

7. *Iṅgu ippariṣuraippār*

“Those who recite (the Pāsurams) here with this idea.”

Though we are in this mundane world, in bondage to non-self, we shall, by merely reciting the pāsurams, enjoy the same exhilarating experience that the gōpikas had in the direct presence of Śrīkṛṣṇa and that Gōḍāḍēvi felt in her mind. Though Gōḍāḍēvi's bond of imaginative identification with the gōpikas is now missing, a mere recital of Āṇḍāl's divine words is sure to be rewarded with the grace of God.

8. *iriraṇḍu mālvarait tōḷ ṣeṅgaṇ tirumugattu celvattiru mālāl:*

“By the magnificent Lord of Śrī (Lakṣmi) with His resplendent face, red-tinged eyes, and four shoulders resembling the summits of lofty mountains.”

The wishes of devotees are fulfilled by Śrīyaḥpati on the mere recital of these Pāsurams. Śrī Kṛṣṇa has four shoulders; but they are not visible to all. They are visible only to the gōpikas. These shoulders appear to have risen higher, with Kṛṣṇa's embracing of the gōpikas that day. The four arms that have lifted Lakṣmi long ago, while churning the ocean of milk, the four arms that have later encompassed the gōpikas in their embrace, can now confer benefits on those who have recited Tiruppāvai today. It is possible to attain union with God by merely reciting Tiruppāvai.

On account of long separation from the gōpikas, the eyes of Lord Kṛṣṇa have faded like the lotus in a tank gone dry. Now that the gōpikas have come in their numbers before Kṛṣṇa, his eyes brighten with new joy and elation and resume their charming beauty, tinged with red streaks. That Lord who cast his benign looks on the gōpikas and on Gōḍāḍēvi will, with his wonted love, graciously look upon the reciters of Tiruppāvai with the same favour. Thus, a mere recital is enough to make people worthy of His gracious favour.

The gōpikas could directly see Kṛṣṇa's face and Kṛṣṇa could observe their complexions. The same is the case with Gōḍāḍēvi also. But we who sedulously and reverently recite this sacred prabandha can only look at the face of Kṛṣṇa as he is engaged in gazing on them. The Lord's face shines with a greater

exuberance of spirits when he is thus engaged; and we are privileged to witness that bewitching halo of his face.

The Lord who possesses such great beauty of shoulders, of face and of eyes, has immense affluence that makes Him worthy of Lakṣmi Dēvi. Śrī, whom the whole world hankers after, has chosen Him for her Lord. That is now He has become "Śrī to Śrī" (wealth of wealth) the lord of Śrī. Thus is he in a competent position to fulfil all our wishes and give us joy.

9. *Eṅgum tiruvaruḷ peṭru inpaṟuvar empāvāy:*

By receiving the Lord's gracious looks, they enjoy bliss everywhere. By reciting this sacred composition we enjoy, under God's grace, all material benefits during our lifetime here below. We shall obtain the privilege of rendering consecrated service to Him after reaching the Heavenly Abode. Wherever this sacred book is reverently recited, there will Lakṣmi and Nārāyaṇa instal themselves, and bless those who recite it. The people who regularly make a reverent recital of this hymnal become worthy of the Divine Mother's favour. Those who have her favour will develop an abiding sense of dependence on Him as the only means. Through her favour they will have ample scope for rendering dedicated service. Hostile and opposing forces subside. All the benefits of this world and of the other world are made available to them. Since all their wishes receive fulfilment, the habitual reciters of the hymnal become free from all burdens of care and enjoy great bliss. When the time comes for them to leave this world, they reach the Heavenly Abode and enjoy the state of eternal bliss in union with God. To be worthy of the grace of Śrīmannārāyaṇa and to attain to a state of bliss, it is enough to perform this Vrata and to recite this *prabandha*, giving up all other means. People of all age-groups, people in all stages of life, people of all communities, men and women, all, without any distinction, are entitled to perform this Vrata; and when they do it with complete self-surrender, they are sure to have their wishes fulfilled, whatever they may be. When unmarried girls perform this vrata or recite this hymnal, they will get married to suitable and worthy husbands, in the same way as the gōpikas could get Kṛṣṇa for their Lord and Gōdādevi Śrīranganātha. By the performance of this Vrata or by the recital of this Prabandha, the Karmayōgis, the Jñāna-

yōgis and the Bhaktiyōgis will progress along their chosen paths with an abiding fervour and conviction. Those who aspire for attainment of God and perennial service to Him, will, by the performance of this Vrata or by reverent recital of this sacred book, find quick fulfilment of their desire.

11. Gōḍāḍēvi has performed this Vrata which yields fruits that give satisfaction to one and all; and she has elucidated the manner of performing it in thirty Pāsurams, for the benefit and salvation of all sentient beings. Though people may not be able to perform the Vrata like her, yet it is possible for them to recite regularly and with pure minds the thirty Pāsurams without making any omission or deviation. And to them are assured all the benefits that Gōḍāḍēvi herself has received.

May the whole sentient world be blessed with salvation by the recital of these sacred hymns!

Āṇḍāl tiruvaḍigaṣi Śaraṇam

Salutations to the sacred feet of Sri Āṇḍāl:

Śrī Gōḍāḍēvyai namaḥ.

Ōm Tat Sat.

Śrī Kṛṣṇārpaṇa mastu.

Ōm Sāntiss Sāntiss Sāntiḥ



